4064

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DATE May 23, 1958

Wuellner, Wilhelm H. — Febr. 21, 1927
Author — Birth Date

The Word of God and the Church of Christ: the Ecumenical Implications of Biblical
Title of Dissertation

Hermeneutics

Divinity School — Ph.D. — June, 1958
Department or School — Degree — Convocation

Permission is herewith granted to the University of Chicago to make copies of the above title, at its discretion, upon the request of individuals or institutions and at their expense.

June 5. 1958 — Date filmed
_____ — Number of pages
Wilhelm H. Wuellner — Signature of writer

Extensive Quotation or Further Reproduction of This Material by Persons or Agencies Other than the University of Chicago May Not Be Made without the Express Permission of the Writer.

SHORT TITLE: The Word of God and the Church of Christ

IRREGULAR NUMBERING ☐ OVERSIZED SHEETS ☐

PAID { By cash ☐ / By thesis deposit ☐

DATE BILLED _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE WORD OF GOD AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST
THE ECUMENICAL IMPLICATIONS OF
BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

WILHELM H. WUELLNER

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JUNE, 1958

PREFACE

The significance of Biblical hermeneutics for an ecumenical orientation of the Christian churches and their theologies first dawned on my mind during the Summer Semester of 1947 at the University of Münster, Germany, in a seminar under Professor Robert Stupperich on the exegetical methods of Luther's early lectures. The intricate developments of the hermeneutical problem in the history of the Church, and in the work of individual scholars of all periods of the history of theology and philosophy, have led me into a wide field of studies since then. Two years later, Professor Bultmann of Marburg stimulated me with his personal advice into looking at the hermeneutical problem not only in terms of its general philosophical and theological implications, but also in terms of contemporary Roman Catholic Biblical scholarship. Personal interviews with three outstanding Catholic exegetes in Germany, Professor Gewiess and Professor Meinertz of Münster, and Professor Schelkle of Tübingen, started me on a long, but fascinating tour of studies and discoveries.

After my graduation from the University in 1951 and some required parish work I returned to my thesis when studying for a year at the Federated Theological Schools of the University of Chicago in 1952-53 with a scholarship grant from the Congregational Christian Churches by way of the World Council of Churches. During that year my own theological outlook had broadened immense-

ly and with it certain perspectives of my thesis. The progress of my study was slowed down by my return to Germany for parish work and teaching in 1953-54. I am thankful to the Westfälische Landeskirchenleitung for letting me take considerable time out from "Vikar"-obligations to continue some of my studies. Instead of, as originally planned, finishing my study under Professor Bultmann at Marburg, I returned to the University of Chicago in the Fall of 1954 when Professor Bultmann retired. I am grateful to the former Dean of Students at Chicago, William Hawley, for his personal encouragement, and to the Divinity School of the University of Chicago for the first scholarship, that were both needed to make me come back to Chicago to finish my work there.

My initial interest in the general trends of contemporary Catholic Biblical interpretation soon proved to be too broad to lead to immediate results. One Protestant scholar bluntly suggested to give up all studies in this field of comparative studies between Protestant and Catholic theology because of fear, or disgust, that it would lead nowhere. I am glad, though, I did not give up, tempted as I felt at times because of weariness or impatience. In the Spring of 1955 I spent a most rewarding time of eleven weeks of study at the library of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. More so than ever before did I realize at that time that, in spite of all the careful preparations I had made to secure the maximum benefit of my short time of study at that superb Institute, I had waded into a field of study which, as broad as I still conceived it then, was like quicksand--the more I stirred, the deeper I sank. I changed the scope of my

thesis right there and then. I focused solely on hermeneutical theory, parting, for the time being, from all study of actual exegesis, contemporary or traditional. To analyze the remarkable "Biblical Renaissance" in modern Catholicism would call for a separate and as detailed a work of research as that of my fellow Lutheran Ernest Koenker on the "Liturgical Renaissance."

The theological implications of Biblical hermeneutics held my attention. In elaborating on Catholic hermeneutics first, I came to deal with two main issues: (1) the analysis of the factors which contributed to the revived interest in Biblical hermeneutics, as evident in the official Papal announcements, in the work of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, and in the labors of representative individual Catholic theologians or schools; (2) the specification of the theological implications of Biblical hermeneutics not only in terms of dogma or liturgical tradition, of theological and philosophical methodology or epistemology, but also, and primarily so, in terms of the "ecumenical" implications.

To propose the thesis of the "ecumenical" implications of Biblical hermeneutics solely on the basis of contemporary Catholicism appeared to be rather peculiar to some who came to know of my intentions. It was then, and rather recently, that, on my own accord, I wanted to include in my study the hermeneutical problem as it appeared in the documents of the Ecumenical Study Conferences, sponsored by the Division of Studies of the World Council of Churches. Comparing the explicit claims for the significance of Biblical hermeneutics for the structure and witness of both the universal Ecumenical and the Roman Catholic Church, my study had reached its final pitch.

To define the nature and extent of the problem of Biblical hermeneutics; to analyze the motives and factors behind the current Biblical renaissance as it bears upon the revived interest in Biblical hermeneutics; and to evaluate the "ecumenical" implications of hermeneutical principles, debated or undebated, in the Biblical witness of the Church and the Biblical substructure of all Christian theology--this, then, is the present aim of my study.

Two successive Fellowship grants from the University of Chicago, Divinity School, provided me with the needed means to continue my work while passing over the numerous hurdles in establishing myself at an American university. The staff members of the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago, particularly those of the Biblical Field, provided just the right climate for me and my thesis to come through.

To the late Professor Wach, who was one of the main reasons why I came to Chicago in 1952, I owe my gratitude for his personal interest he took in my work; to Professor Bultmann I am indebted for many generous, personal consultations in his classes or at his home; to Father McCool, S.J., of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome I am obliged for his taking time and pains to introduce me to the unbelievable wealth of material available there, and to have me meet some of the faculty members of the Institute. To Dr. Gerald A. Larue, director of the Committee of the Use and Understanding of the Bible, of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.; to Dr. Robert Nelson and Dr. Hans Heinrich Harms of the Division of Studies of the World Coun-

cil of Churches; to the director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Dr. Hans Heinrich Wolf--I am indebted for help I received from each, either in form of personal letters or mimeographed material.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
PREFACE		ii
INTRODUCTION		1
	PART I. BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS IN CONTEMPORARY ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY	
Chapter I.	ORIGIN OF PRESENT-DAY PROTESTANT BIBLICAL RENAISSANCE	8
II.	PROGRAMMATIC BIBLE STUDY THROUGH INTERCHURCH PROJECTS IN U.S.A. AND CANADA	17
III.	HERMENEUTICAL ISSUES IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT	27
IV.	SUMMARY OF THE HERMENEUTICAL ISSUES	70
	PART II. BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS IN MODERN ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY	
V.	THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1870	83
VI.	MODERN CATHOLIC REVIEWS OF THE HISTORY OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS	147
VII.	THE SYSTEM OF CATHOLIC BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS	170
	PART III. THE WORD OF GOD AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST	
VIII.	A CRITICAL COMPARISON OF THE ROLE OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS IN ECUMENICAL PROTESTANTISM AND ROMAN CATHOLICISM	190
IX.	THE ECUMENICAL IMPLICATIONS OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS	202
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY		213

INTRODUCTION

To approach as a theologian the problem of hermeneutics, i.e., the theory of understanding and of interpretation, specifically of literary documents, is in itself a complex and comprehensive task, due to the methodological and epistemological questions involved. To approach the theological significance of hermeneutics within the historical context of present-day ecumenical encounters between churches and theologies will appear as an immodest task. But, furthermore, to include in this study, for comparative and theological reasons, an analysis of the approach to, and the concept of, Biblical hermeneutics in contemporary Roman Catholic theology must seem to border on the improper.

Nevertheless, the seemingly limitless scope of this study is justified by what is commonly observed that the Ecumenical and Catholic movements in modern Christianity display identical signs of recourse to the authority of Holy Scripture. The final organization of ecumenical tendencies of long standing in the Protestant churches in the birth of the Ecumenical Movement, and the rebirth of Roman Catholicism in the last century, both coincide with the coming of age of Biblical studies as a separate, leading theological discipline, revitalizing, or even reorganizing, the structure and content of theology as a science, as well as the function of theology in the life and witnessing of the Church.

Historically, there is an interrelationship between the

phenomenon of the modern Biblical renaissance and the phenomenon of the organization of Ecumenical Protestantism and the reorganization of Roman Catholicism. This study, however, wants to go beyond the historical analysis of this interrelationship. Its aim is to uncover the hitherto unnoticed ecumenical implications of Biblical hermeneutical theories. Its aim is to outline the ways and reasons in which the theoretical, theological implications of the interpretation, and of the authority, of the Bible are by necessity connected with the study of the theoretical, theological implications of the nature, and the unity, of the Christian Church, of the Christian faith, and of the Church's message to the world.

The ecumenical implications of Biblical hermeneutics will become evident as we proceed in our analysis of the definitions of Biblical hermeneutics in Ecumenical Protestantism (Part One) and those set forth in modern Roman Catholicism (Part Two). In the final outline and definition of the ecumenical implications of hermeneutical theories concerning Scriptural interpretation (Part Three) attention will be focused on the degree of relevance that hermeneutical criteria and norms have for the practical, ecumenical problem of maintaining the unity of the Church and the unity of the Christian faith and its witness.

In the course of this study, three terms will constantly be referred to: hermeneutical, ecumenical, and eschatological. All three are rather unfamiliar terms in the American theological tradition. Hermeneutical and hermeneutics will be defined below. Ecumenical, another word for "catholic," denotes the union or unity of the Christian faith and its witness, as the unity of the

kerygma (as both doctrine and ethics) and the unity of the Tradition and the Scriptural Canon (dogmatically and liturgically). Eschatological and eschatology designate the actually, historically experienced and experiencable reality and presence of the Spirit in the order of creation (as nature and history) and in the mind of man. Through this study it is hoped that the interrelationship between hermeneutics, ecumenics (in both, its very concrete aspects as well as its theoretical aspects of the unity of Kerygma, Canon, and Tradition), and eschatology becomes clearly established and focused upon--an urgently needed task long neglected.

Hermeneutics, by definition and in the history of man's scientific and philosophic development, is known as a theoretical discipline not necessarily of any theological relevance. Distinguished from the practical discipline of exegesis, the scientific or artistic, imaginative execution of understanding and interpreting the manifestations of reality, hermeneutics has an exclusively theoretical concern, both for the total structure of the physical and psychical processes involved in the task of understanding and interpretation, as well as for the full nature and content of what seeks, or is being sought, to be understood, i.e., the object toward which the understanding is directed. As every major philosophical school, on its own accord, felt the need, both apologetically and polemically, to outline the processes that went with its theory, or practice, of understanding and interpreting reality, so also every major religion took issue with hermeneutical problems. For a particular religion, or rather its theology, the theoretical concern for hermeneutics was either

constituted by its concern for understanding and interpreting rightly the full nature and content of what religion professes as "ultimate reality," or it was constituted by the more specific concern for the right interpretation of given religious documents containing metaphysical, ritual, moral, or historical truths of purported universal significance.

The nature and content of theological hermeneutics, and its historical development, present problems of great complexity, as well as of practical significance. Traditionally, there has prevailed in Christian theology a certain valid trend of approaching hermeneutical theory in two complimentary ways. One way is that of so-called "general hermeneutics" which deals with the problems of the scientific, as well as the philosophical, nature of understanding and interpretation. The scientific occupation includes philology, archeology, history, and the study of the culture, of the religion, and of the political, social, and economic conditions, bearing upon the literary form of a religious document and its pronouncements. In "general hermeneutics" the interpreter seeks to establish the nature and the means of communicating meaning; he focuses on the philosophical problem of epistemology and methodology as aspects of practical relevance for the orientation of the interpreter's approach to his object--the text and its meaning.

The other way for theological hermeneutics to establish itself is that of "special hermeneutics," which is concerned with the religious, divine, "holy" character, or meaning, of the text. Particular problems of "special hermeneutics" are: inspiration,

the authorship or authority of God, the Canon of Scripture, and the Tradition of the Church (liturgical and doctrinal).

Hermeneutical theory is theologically relevant not only in the part which is called "special hermeneutics" dealing with explicit theological issues, but also relevant theologically to that part, called "general hermeneutics." For, while "special hermeneutics" focuses on the epistemological, hermeneutical implications of the nature of God's, and the Church's, stand in this world, it is in "general hermeneutics" that we focus on the same implications, but now of man's mind, and of the history of man, in the eyes of God. "General" and "special hermeneutics," then, are two separate, but coordinated, complementary ways of looking at, and of approaching the same thing--the fact that God has spoken to man, and that man is called to understand <u>that</u> and <u>what</u> God has spoken.

Biblical hermeneutics is the Church's attempt objectively and critically to look at itself and to test, whether or not the Church and the World are on the right way to understand rightly and fully what God has spoken in His final, eschatological self-disclosure through Jesus and the advent of the Spirit. The task of Biblical hermeneutics is constituted by two factors: one, the belief that a written, historical record, the Biblical, Scriptural witness, is, or contains, the Word of God; the other, the fact of a variety of presuppositions that enter, and always have entered, into the process of understanding and interpreting the Bible.

The concept of the authority of the Bible for all Christian theology, for the organization, and the witness, of the

Church in the world, always has been, and still is, developed not independently from, but inextricably linked, together with all sorts of "presuppositions," Christian and non-Christian, religious and secular, theological and philosophical, scientific and unscientific ones. In outlining the actual recent attempts of clarifying the nature and task of the scientific and theological discipline of Biblical hermeneutics in Christian theology, the "ecumenical" implications of this discipline will readily become apparent, and will call for a systematic, constructive presentation.

PART I

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS IN CONTEMPORARY ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF PRESENT-DAY PROTESTANT BIBLICAL RENAISSANCE

To account in detail for all the contributing forces to present-day Protestant Biblical renaissance in theology and in the life of the churches would exceed the immediate objective of this study. One such account has been given by a participant in many ecumenical study conferences, Miss Suzanne de Diétrich.[1] More detailed studies will be necessary to analyze all the facets of this movement, because the more comprehensive our understanding is of the various origins of this Biblical renaissance, the better will we be able to determine the full extent of the relevance of Scriptural studies for theology and church. Without trying to account for every single factor involved, a survey of the more conspicuous factors will provide a suggestive framework for the following study. The contributing factors to the Biblical revival in Protestant, and to some extent also in Roman Catholic, theology and church can be classified in two main groups, first those deriving from either traditional or present-day scientific theological or dogmatic confessional debates and controversy; secondly, those originating in the devotional, spiritual experiences and needs of individuals or groups.

---

[1] Le Renouveau Biblique ("Ecclesia Militans," Study Department, World Council of Churches. Neuchatel, 1945).

To begin with the latter, I refer to the widely-made observation that the centuries-old process of alienation of Christian devotion and piety from its traditional source of nurture, the Bible, came to a climax in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the secularization of the masses of people most drastically in countries with a traditionally Christian culture. A variety of factors, due to political, social, and economic unrest and upheaval, caused a growing reaction against this alienation. Two kinds of reactionaries--clericals, conservatives, and traditionalists on the one hand; fundamentalists, pietists, revivalists, and other kinds of reductionists or primitivists on the other hand--had been raising their voices all along to combat the danger. The saving devices offered by these traditional opponents to the secularization and alienation of Christianity from the Bible may appear as having been proved to be effective at least by the measure of the statistical growth of the number of adherents and advocates of these reactionary groups.

But the spiritual dilemma continued to be felt keenly and increasingly in spite of (or because of?) these reactionary trends. In the period after the First World War we notice other forces emerging in, and contributing to, the growing Biblical renaissance. The new spiritual frontiers on the mission fields at home and abroad; the need for an authoritative Scriptural guide in matters of Christianity's responsibility in post-war social and political life everywhere; the revived desire for liturgical forms of private and communal worship, based on the claim of a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of Scripture and the tradition of Scriptural interpretation; the new demands for a

more Biblical orientation in preaching and in Christian education--this was the spiritual, devotional climate in which the regeneration of interest in the Bible developed.

Another way of characterizing those factors in the present-day Biblical renaissance which originated in spiritual experiences and needs is to distinguish between factors originating inside and outside the Church. The outside factors emerge due to changes in the pattern of the political, social, cultural, economic, and religious life of whatever part of the world a Christian happens to live in and to share, individually or communally, i.e., as member of a church. For these variable patterns always will determine, as they always have determined, the approach to Scripture. From within the Church different factors were at work. The return to, or the turning to, the Bible was the result of the rising tide of closer relation between Protestant denominations. All the national and international alliances, unions, federations, conferences, committees, and councils, to which the various churches committed themselves in the last fifty years,[1] took pains to emphasize in various degrees that the Bible was the more or less acknowledged sign and measure of agreement. The same emphasis on Scripture appeared in connection with interdenominational encounters on the national and international scale, e.g., in the foreign mission field, in home mission and charity work, in the World Conferences on "Faith and Order" and "Life and Work," the Evangelical Alliance, the World Student Christian Federation,

---

[1]R. Rouse and S. C. Neill, A history of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948 (London: S.P.C.K., 1954), especially Chapters VIII-XIII.

the world-wide Y.M.C.A., and many other organizations and movements within, or related to, the life of the Church.

Side by side with the newly developing factors from within the Church, there were also at work, of course, those already mentioned, ever-present reactionary forces of either the traditionalist or fundamentalist version. Both kinds of forces, the newly developing and the reactionary, were historically and essentially related to one another in a manner sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile. Whatever else ought to be said about the originality of the motives for the Biblical renaissance as the expression of a new spiritual climate during the last fifty years or so, and whatever else could be said about the negative value of either the traditionalist's or the pietist's contribution to the extent or limit of the Church's interest in the Bible, it has been observed and maintained, however tentatively, that a valuable heritage of Scriptural studies has been transmitted by these reactionary groups. It could be proved by the little weight this heritage carried in contemporary theological discussion and spiritual concern, that it was insufficient and ineffective for the issues at stake in our time. The main contribution of the reactionary groups to the awakening hermeneutical discussion lay in preserving and restating the claims of two rather extreme traditions which deeply influenced the Church's approach to Scripture:
(1) the dogmatical, confessional, hierarchial tradition, and
(2) the spiritual, mystical, pietistic, "existential" tradition.
Both traditions claim to provide the adequate presuppositions of primary importance, warranting the right approach to, and the full

interpretation of, Sacred Scripture. We will have to consider the validity of these claims for the scientific study of Scripture when we come to deal with two similar claims in modern Catholic theology.[1]

In speaking now of the regenerating forces at work in the scientific theological debate and the dogmatical controversy of our time, it will be convenient again to distinguish between contributing factors emerging from within and those originating outside the Church. To analyze these factors in detail is not my immediate objective. A generally fair analysis of the variety and complexity of the issues involved has been presented recently by Wolfgang Schweitzer,[2] formerly one of the study secretaries of the Division of Studies of the World Council of Churches. More studies will be required to uncover all of the motivating forces which led to the reunion of Scriptural study and scientific theological research. But some dominant factors stand out clearly. To enumerate them will demonstrate how the issue of Scriptural interpretation in scientific theology depends not only upon the regenerative spiritual forces mentioned above pressing from within and without the Church, but also upon the stimulating forces of scientific and doctrinal progress.

There are factors of revitalizing influence on Biblical studies which originate in, or are determined by, movements and institutions not necessarily connected with the Church at all. There is the progress of science with its material discoveries,

---

[1]See below, pp. 147-69; cf. pp. 61-65.

[2]Schrift und Dogma in der Oekumene (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1953).

new methodologies and epistemologies. Included among the discoveries are new archeological data, and above all the multitude and variety of epigraphical findings, as the recovered ancient Biblical manuscripts, the countless papyri, and whole libraries of secular and religious literature related to Scripture. Furthermore, there are the philological studies in Ugaritic, Koiné Greek, and other "Biblical" languages; the literary studies of form-criticism, long familiar to Classical philology, but now systematically applied to Biblical studies; new historical studies of the religious, philosophical, political, social, and cultural environment of the Old and New Testaments; the first comprehensive studies of Hellenistic-Roman rhetoric and dialectic. Even such a seemingly insignificant field of studies as that of Biblical illuminations and the pictorial arts in catacombs, churches, and synagogues of the Roman era contributed to a new zest in Scriptural studies, bearing upon a rising vogue of symbolical and typological interpretation, welcome to liturgists and dogmatists.

The rise of new methodologies and epistemologies, originating in a growing reaction to all kinds of relativistic, pluralistic historism or psychologism, and to all kinds of dogmatical positivism, also gave a fresh lift to Scriptural studies. Both the empirical and the theoretical or speculative sciences contributed to broader foundations and more complex presuppositions in scientific inquiry. Whether deriving from "empirical" sciences, such as psychology and sociology, or from philosophical metaphysics and ontological existentialism, the main contribution

of scientific methodology and epistemology to the revival of Biblical studies was the articulation of inevitable presuppositions--individual or communal, theoretical or existential--which always and necessarily enter into an act of interpretation, supremely so with literary documents of a religious character and claim.

Revived interest in Biblical interpretation can furthermore be attributed to the work of Bible societies,[1] Biblical associations, Bible institutes, and the Bible clubs of scholars and intellectuals. Also influential was the growing circulation of scientific scholarly journals, bulletins, revues, and zeitschriften of international and interdenominational repute, in which scholars debated and exchanged all matters pertaining to a greater use and better understanding of the Bible.

To be distinguished from the factors arising out of the spiritual needs and devotional practices of the faithful, and out of the developments of scientific methods and fields of knowledge, are those factors in today's Biblical renaissance which originated in new constructive ways of theological thinking and in reappraisals of the various ecclesiastical and doctrinal traditions. In performing this twofold task, scientific theology is obliged to accomplish two things simultaneously: it must be dedicated to its subject, the nature of religion, however defined; and it must be true to the objective of the Christian religion,

---

[1]A. M. Chirgwin, "Have the Bible and its Circulation any Significance for the Ecumenical Movement?" Ecumenical Review, VI, 3 (April, 1954), 295-99; W. J. Platt, "The Bible societies and cooperation amongst the churches," ibid., VI, 4 (July, 1954), 379-84.

i.e., the proselytizing, missionary aims, the redeeming function, and the apologetical or polemical character of Biblical faith. Both these aspects are equally relevant to the scientific theological enterprise. It is important, therefore, to keep reminding oneself that the reasoning of theologians about the Biblical foundation and orientation of their respective fields of study in Church or University is subject, on the one hand, to an "objective," scientific interest in Scripture as the historical document of the original nature of the Christian religion, on the other hand to the "subjective," professional or denominational preoccupations and biases concerning Scripture and its application today.

In addition to this, the task of reappraising the tradition of Biblical authority in the history of Christian thought and the history of the Church, and of accounting for the function of Biblical studies in making the Christian message relevant for today, is to be executed together with three other urgent tasks inherent to the propagation of Biblical faith: (1) Christianity's relation to secular culture and science; (2) Christianity's relation to all non-Christian world religions; (3) the interrelation of the various Christian denominations and communions on the basis of those elements in the universal faith in Christ and the common use of the Bible, on which agreement has been reached or is being sought.

The following two chapters are to illustrate, in the historical development of interchurch Bible programs in the United States and Canada and of the Bible study programs of the Division of Studies of the World Council of Churches, (1) certain trends

in the "ecumenical" use and the theological understanding of Scripture; (2) the resultant or presupposed demands implicit or explicit, for some universally valid hermeneutical principles; (3) the groping for a more adequate definition of the nature and function of Biblical hermeneutics in the Biblical renaissance of Church and Theology today.

CHAPTER II

PROGRAMMATIC BIBLE STUDY THROUGH INTERCHURCH PROJECTS IN U.S.A. AND CANADA

There has developed recently a significant theological enterprise on the American continent concerning the promotion of Biblical studies. Out of the rewarding experiences of sponsoring Bible observances in local churches, a request arose that the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.[1] set up a program designed to promote Biblical studies. The basis of such a program is the realization of the Church's mission of educating people to walk in the ways that will accomplish the Church's redemptive purpose in the world. Once the people of the various churches expressed the need for help to learn ways and means of realizing the mission and purpose of the Church, a new committee of the Division of Christian Education was ready to be launched in 1952. It was called the Committee on the Use and Understanding of the Bible.[2] In 1956 the C.U.U.B. was invited by the Department of Christian Education of the Canadian Council of Churches to help start a similar committee for the Canadian scene. The report of its first year of service in Canada documents great initial success, and the Ameri-

---

[1]Hereafter referred to as N.C.C.

[2]Hereafter referred to as C.U.U.B.

can C.U.U.B. has pledged further assistance in the years to come.[1]

The C.U.U.B. works in cooperation with denominational and interdenominational leaders. All of its programs are conducted under the auspices of local State or City Council of Churches. The general objective of its program has been defined as "to provide ways for encouraging a wider use and a better understanding of the Bible in all [sic] versions through local interchurch channels."[2] With the emerging controversy over the value of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which was adopted as the new official translation for the N.C.C. in the same year the C.U.U.B. was founded, the objective of the C.U.U.B. was rephrased as

> to develop an aggressive and educationally sound nationwide program that will eliminate misunderstandings and misconceptions concerning the Revised Standard Version among ministers and laymen alike in more than fifty denominations.[3]

This aspect of the program of the C.U.U.B. will become less important as time goes on. The main objective will remain the same--to bring about a wider use and a better understanding of the Bible.

The C.U.U.B. operates at present with a five point field program through five regional offices in 1956, serving thirty-one states. The five points are: (1) community visitations, e.g., sponsoring, and assisting in, Bible-centered projects; preaching

---

[1]"Report of C.U.U.B. to Executive Board, Division of Christian Education N.C.C." (Cincinnati, Ohio: Feb. 15, 1957), p. 10.

[2]"Handbook for interchurch projects on the use and understanding of the Bible" (San Francisco: C.U.U.B.; mimeographed).

[3]"Report of C.U.U.B.," op. cit., p. 2.

and speaking in churches about the aims of the C.U.U.B.; teaching in short term leadership education schools concerned with Biblical studies; giving information to ministers, directors of religious education, etc.; (2) Bible-centered project programs, e.g., family worship, world-wide Bible reading (in cooperation with the American Bible Society), etc.; (3) university, college, and seminary visitations, organized separately from the visitation of Point One; it consists of conferences with the faculty of departments of religion for the purpose of bringing about deeper understanding of Scripture; (4) communication services, e.g., traveling archeological exhibits, manuscript and Bible print displays, the use of posters, radio, movie, television, etc.; (5) ecumenical institutes--the first one in 1956 was an experiment of interracial Bible programs in the South. The scope of this program is immense, indeed. For the purpose of this study only two of the five points demand closer attention.

Point number two includes no less than eight different kinds of projects, one of which, called Project Number Four, is relevant to the hermeneutical trend in modern Protestantism. Under the sponsorship of the Department of Administration and Leadership of the N.C.C., some theoretical issues concerning the understanding and interpretation of the Bible are discussed in some of the leadership education Bible courses.[1] Promotional ideas for Bible studies, in the form of accredited courses on a variety of subjects concerning Scripture, are made available to

---

[1]Leadership education handbook 1956 (New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in U.S.A.), pp. 30-32, 42-44.

personnel in Christian education, to ministers, teachers in schools, and to all interested laymen. The reasons why all these people clearly demand or vaguely desire more adequate ways and more appropriate means of understanding and interpreting the Bible could be sought in the wider context of the factors which are outlined above as contributing to the present-day Biblical renaissance in Protestantism. The C.U.U.B. ventures to name only one indubitable factor that can account for the interest in hermeneutical issues--the publication of the Revised Standard Version in 1952.[1]

In the mimeographed material of the Leaders' Guides for these Bible courses[2] only the bare minimum of theoretical, hermeneutical concerns is evident. The courses include the conventional topics of Introduction to the Bible, Translating the Bible into English, How the Bible Came To Be, Surveys of the Old and New Testament--Content and Values, The Life and Teaching of the Prophets, of Jesus, of Paul. In a special course, entitled How To Read and Study the Bible,[3] the range and depth of hermeneutical interests in the programs of the C.U.U.B. are adequately summarized in the front-page description of the aim and the scope of this key course. The aim is "to help individuals develop a plan and method for direct reading and study of the Bible." The scope of Biblical studies is identified with "the values of personal Bible reading and

---

[1]"Report of C.U.U.B.," op. cit., p. 8.

[2]"Leaders' guides for series courses of the standard leadership curriculum" (Chicago: National Council of Churches of Christ in U.S.A.).

[3](Chicago: National Council of Churches of Christ in U.S.A., March, 1955).

study for the individual Christian (and the) development of a personal plan for Bible reading and study." The consideration of exegetical methods and of the value of translations into modern vernacular speech emphasizes the character of the Bible as a collection of ancient literary, historical documents of religious significance, but obscured by their oriental forms of expression. As for the reader's approach, it is emphasized that the following elementary rules be observed: an open mind; respect for the individuality of the Biblical authors; regard for the time, circumstance, and purpose of the writing; care for the context in which a passage appears (the addressee, the structure of a whole book, and the context of the Canon); and finally a warning against allegorical interpretation.[1]

In this summary of explicit hermeneutical concerns, the emphasis lies notably on the historical and literary character of the Bible, less, or hardly at all, on the religious and theological character. The reader is advised to "accept the simplest and most natural interpretation as the true meaning," and to pay attention to the time- and form-conditioned elements in the Bible."[2] Sincere study is the only guarantee "that we may be sure to understand. (But only) after we have studied [italics mine], are we ready for devotional meditation."[3] The relation of the devotional use of Scripture to the "scientific" study of Scripture (or vice versa), and the burning issue of how to apply the Bible to my present situation, individual or communal, is seen rather dimly. One must give credit to the N.C.C. for at least mentioning the issues and for drawing attention to them.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 4. [2] Ibid., p. 4. [3] Ibid., p. 8.

Although it is maintained that exegetical theory of interpretation is relevant to the right use of Scripture, the value of using the Bible in the various projects sponsored by the C.U.U.B. is determined by three, more or less purely practical, ends it serves. The use and understanding of the Bible (1) deepens the Christian's religious sensitivity, individually and communally; (2) widens the individual and communal sense of moral obligation; (3) contributes to the realization of interchurch relationships and experiences of Ecumenical oneness on the basis of the one and same Bible, used and understood in the different churches.

To make the Bible more relevant for the realization of Christianity's role of moral leadership to-day, and to make the Bible the authoritative guide to, and basis of, Ecumenical cooperation, are two of the three tasks in the field program of the C.U.U.B. which imply the relevance of exegetical theory for the use of Scripture. The leadership education Bible courses follow an almost exclusively pragmatical approach in their suggestions of how to execute these tasks. No theoretical issues are being raised over the why's and how's of Biblical authority for Christian ethics and Ecumenical cooperation. No theoretical, i.e., theological, implications are seen in the hermeneutical theories of the nature of the Biblical document and of the methods of interpretation, even when it comes to defining the role of Scripture in the task of deepening the Christian's "religious sensitivity." But in this latter regard, some far-reaching implications are at least mentioned which do not bear upon the nature

and significance of hermeneutical issues, but only upon possible applications of the right use of Scripture in fields pertaining to religious sensitivity. If--as "A Word to the Leaders"[1] outlines--the study of Scripture (1) has therapeutic overtones, (2) leads to spiritual, i.e., theological, dogmatical insights, (3) brings about a sense and a need for worship, then the methods of Bible studies, the hermeneutical principles employed and implied in the Bible courses of the C.U.U.B., must also have some significance for the ways, means, and reasons by which the Bible is to be used in these three respective fields. But neither the education Bible courses, nor the field program of the C.U.U.B. as a whole make any provision for further consideration of such implications.

The other point in the five point field program of the C.U.U.B., which appears relevant to the study of hermeneutical trends in modern Protestantism in its Ecumenical orientation, is that mentioned under Point Three (above, p. 19). In realizing this part of the program, the C.U.U.B. was working in 1956 with the faculty staff of one hundred and fifty-two universities, seminaries, and colleges in twenty-five states. The absence of any contact, so far, with the schools of higher education in the Northeast and the Great Lakes area, e.g., Chicago, Minneapolis, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, New York, et al., is rather conspicuous. But more important is the intention of the C.U.U.B. in approaching schools of higher education in the first place. No definite program has been developed yet. The distribution of thousands

---

[1]National Council of the Churches of Christ, Division of Christian Education (n.p., n.d.), passim.

of interpretative pamphlets, read or to be read and studied by faculty and students alike, is the only action taken so far. The ultimate objective of this particular program is, of course, to establish and to justify the relevance of Biblical studies for all fields of higher education, for science and culture, and for the constructive task of Christian theology. The future will have to prove whether or not, and with what means, the C.U.U.B. can and will carry out this part of its program which involves, besides its practical aims, plenty of theoretical and dogmatical issues.

Three additional observations, made and emphasized by various staff members of the C.U,U.B., may further illumine the scene of the Committee's field program and the prospects for the future. (1) The over-all favorable and encouraging response to the program of the C.U.U.B. was limited regionally and denominationally to the more ardent advocates of the program: Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, Disciples of Christ, and most Lutherans. (2) The cooperative or non-cooperative attitude of a church to the program of the C.U.U.B. depends largely on the attitude of the pastor. The individual qualification for pastoral leadership or Christian stewardship, and the degree of quality of theological training in institutions of higher education are decisive factors in the attempts of the C.U.U.B. to make Biblical authority in Church and University not only acceptable, but also desirable and reasonable. (3) In trying to serve as many denominations as are willing to cooperate by striving to bring about a wider use and a better understanding of the Bible, the Committee is committed to only the minimum and the essentials of hermeneutical principles to which all parties can

agree. We have to see later on whether this minimum, as outlined above (cf. p. 22) can serve the manifold tasks of the C.U.U.B. It can suffice here at the moment to reflect the impression that the C.U.U.B. is all too keenly aware of the necessity of modifying its own charge concerning the relevance of Biblical hermeneutics for the life and the thoughts of Christians by keeping constantly in mind the Committee's two immediate and practical objectives. Charged with the promotion of the use and understanding of the Bible, the C.U.U.B. wants to foster the willingness of cooperation among the member churches of the N.C.C. on the basis of the use of Scripture, and on the same basis it wants to prevent any cause of division to arise or to re-enter. And yet, it is because of confessional and dogmatical views about the use and understanding of the Bible, that churches began to reunite or to cooperate with one another; but it was, and still is, for precisely the same reasons that churches separated and the desirable synthesis of Biblical faith and scientific knowledge disintegrated.

In working with different churches, the staff members of the C.U.U.B. found themselves repeatedly amazed over the amount of latitude which one denomination will allow another in interpreting the Bible. Grateful for this broad margin to be used as a starting point, the C.U.U.B. defines the function of Biblical hermeneutics both negatively, i.e,, preventing "eisegesis" or any interference of preconceived notions with the use and understanding of the Bible, and positively, i.e., providing all the desirable or required aids for making the whole Bible speak for itself. The program of the C.U.U.B. clearly implies certain general hermeneutical principles, But it is felt that in work-

ing with so many denominations and theological traditions it would be unwise to insist on any particular set or system of hermeneutical principles (the nature of such sets or systems is not described). To enforce them would most certainly lead to old or new disruption. This latent danger is felt very keenly.

CHAPTER III

HERMENEUTICAL ISSUES IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Historically, the concern with hermeneutical issues in Ecumenical theology goes back to the very origin of Ecumenical aspirations in the history of Protestant theology. The Bible always had a place of priority among the issues which kept the Protestant, Catholic, and "Orthodox" churches and their theologies actually apart or virtually together. But when, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the churches began in concrete and successful ways to face their mutual obligations to one another and to the world, the problem of how to unite the various traditions and theories of interpreting Scripture, and the problem of how to recover the authoritative and critical value of the faith and ethos of Scripture for the divided life and witness of the churches, became very acute. The following paragraph deals with only the immediate history of the developing interest in Biblical hermeneutics as significant aspect of the Ecumenical movement since its formal organization during the 1940's in preparation for the First General Assembly of the World Council of Churches[1] at Amsterdam in 1948.

The provisional Study Department of the W.C.C. organized a number of special study conferences, assigned to draw up the

---

[1]Hereafter referred to as W.C.C.

generally, i.e., Ecumenically accepted rules of Biblical interpretation which could be recommended for use in all study sessions working on the Assembly theme. The first plans for such conferences were made in February, 1946. The first actual meeting took place in London on August 10-12, 1946.[1] Of the twenty-four delegates ten came from England, nine from Western Europe and Scandinavia, five from the U.S.A. The churches were represented as follows: Congregationalists and Anglicans by five delegates each, Lutherans by four, Evangelical and Reformed by three, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Dutch Reformed by two each, and Russian Orthodox by one. The group was composed, about equally half, of professors of theology and bishops or church officials.

Conscious of the pioneering character of the work not only of this conference, but also of many that had yet to follow, the London conference emphasized, as relevant for the task assigned to it, three aspects of the problem of Biblical authority for the Ecumenical Movement: (1) to recognize the complexity of motives compelling the churches to turn, or return, to the Bible; (2) to acknowledge the hermeneutical issues involved in seeking Biblical authority for theology; (3) to maintain the continuity with the World Conferences on Faith and Order and their study sections on "The Church of Christ and the Word of God,"[2] which, historically, were the most recent and latest "official" attempts of tackling hermeneutical issues in Ecumenical theology. Only

---

[1]"From the Bible to the modern world" (Geneva: Study Department of the World Council of Churches, 1947; Mimeographed).

[2]L. Hodgson (ed.), The second world conference on faith and order (New York: Macmillan, 1938), pp. 228-35.

the second aspect was given full and explicit attention. The following study will be concerned solely with this second aspect and how it expanded. The motivating factors of the Biblical renaissance in Protestantism of today, with which the first aspect is concerned, have already been accounted for (above, pp. 8 - 16). As to the third aspect emphasized by the London conference, concerning the legacy of hermeneutical discussions in the history of the Ecumenical movement up to 1945, we feel justified in not analyzing this aspect at all, partly because the emphasis on the importance of this legacy was kept on the periphery of the debate, was never made explicit, and proved to be of no strategic value for future conferences--partly because the intricacies of the historical and organizational relations of the W.C.C. to "Faith and Order" are too complex to be sketched briefly. And although some members of the study conferences of the W.C.C. were also members of previous and simultaneous conferences of "Faith and Order," the great initial confusion in the relationship between the W.C.C. and "Faith and Order," and the change of theological orientation brought about in 1954, when "Faith and Order" finally became part of the Division of Studies of the W.C.C., would require precise historical analyses irrelevant to the pursuit of the ultimate objective of this study.

In view of the Amsterdam Assembly theme, "Man's disorder and God's design," the hermeneutical issues arising from the application of Scripture to the study of this theme were approached from two sides. The question of "God's design" as revealed in Scripture called for an explicit discussion of the nature and content of Scripture and of the correct interpretation

of it. The following questions cover the extent of the debate: What principle of interpretation can be detected in the Bible itself? What is the interrelation of historical and theological interpretation? Of what nature is the unity and the difference between the two Testaments? How does Scripture relate to Tradition as the continuation of God's design in the history and witness of the Church in the world?

In view of the question of "Man's disorder," with its hermeneutical implications in the claim of Biblical authority for the Church's witness to Man, hermeneutical issues of another kind were debated at London. They can be summarized in the following two questions: Are the moral claims of the Bible as time-conditioned as the religious manifestations of Biblical faith, i.e., can the relation of Law and Gospel be used as adequate hermeneutical criterion? In what way is the understanding and interpretation of the Scriptural record of Biblical faith and ethics subject to the dialectic of promise and fulfilment, of the suspension of the Old Covenant by the New, i.e., can the "divine economy," the Biblical plan of salvation in history, still serve as decisive hermeneutical criterion when applying Scripture, e.g., to political problems or to the problem of Israel as race and as nation?[1]

After three short days of debate, the first study conference of the W.C.C., exclusively concerned with the theory of Biblical interpretation, had reached an important, urgent conclusion, qualified or modified by an equally important, encouraging

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 39-42 et passim.

observation. It was found that during this "problem-raising" conference "a great variety of points of view came to light, which showed that very thorough preparation was necessary, if the proposed fifth volume on Biblical Authority (as one of the preparatory volumes for the Amsterdam Assembly) was to be truly ecumenical."[1] But it was also felt that the surprising amount of common agreement on basic hermeneutical issues, reflected in the questions stated above, was the reward and the hopeful sign of this London adventure.

At about the same time an American theological discussion group is reported[2] to have considered similar questions to those debated at London, but no report of this American group seems to have been published. A second European conference, however, got under way at the newly founded Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, near Geneva, only five months after the London conference had disbanded, and only a little more than a year before the Amsterdam Assembly convened. Of the twenty-eight delegates, conferring for a whole week in January of 1947, only three had also attended the London conference. The denominational representation is worth noting. Nearly half the delegates were from "left wing" Protestant churches, Reformed, Evangelical and Reformed, and Congregationalists, balanced by eight Lutherans, three German Evangelicals, and one each of Old Catholic, Bohemian Brethren, Anglican, and Russian Orthodox. Twenty-five came from the Continent, two from England, one from the U.S.A. Nineteen university

---

[1] Ibid., p. 3.

[2] Ibid., p. 3 (Papers were prepared by James Muilenberg, John C. Bennett, Amos N. Wilder, Walter M. Horton).

professors debated with nine bishops and clergymen. The objective of the conference was to go over the suggestions made by the London conference, and "to discover, if possible, some definite hermeneutical principles."[1]

The problems raised and debated in the papers and discussions of the Bossey conference[2] may be summarized as follows. The necessity of a sound scientific orientation of theological interpretations of Scripture is to be acknowledged, provided that the New Testament and its idea of Christ is maintained as the focal point of all theory or practice of exegesis. The task of exegetical theory was alternately defined as seeing to it that the unity of the two Testaments is preserved; or that Christ remains the center of Scripture; or that the <u>whole</u> Bible, through Christ, becomes authority; or that the Bible's own methods of interpreting itself are observed and imitated; or that neither science, reason, "natural law," nor any extra-Biblical source with claims of ultimate validity, nor any sacred tradition or creeds, replace the sole authority of God in Christ speaking in the Scriptures interpreted by the Church.

In the concluding debate at Bossey seven "working theses" were adopted to serve as future guides.[3] The following points were once more accentuated--the objective of many a conference, to bring into focus the issue of the authority of the Bible for the Ecumenical enterprise, was felt to have been realized at Bossey in the simple agreement to recognize as the basic hermeneutical rule for Ecumenical theology that, in order to

---

[1]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 3. [2]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 43-110. [3]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 112-13.

understand and interpret the Bible as authority, one must first find a common theological center. This presupposed center was qualified by two important statements: it was said to determine, as well as to be determined by, exegetical theory and practice; it was identified with Jesus Christ, the object and/or subject of the universal, Ecumenical Christian faith. That Christ was to be recognized and restored as the Alpha and Omega in the Ecumenical approach to Biblical hermeneutics, was agreed on by all delegates at Bossey. But everybody disagreed with nearly everybody else, even with representatives of his own denomination, when it came to defining the theories and methods by which the living authority of Christ in the word of Scripture was to be applied to concrete problems of dogma and ethics.

It was felt at the conclusion of the Bossey conference that no definite hermeneutical system, valid for all, should be or could be adopted. However, one fundamental hermeneutical principle was recommended because it was found to be commonly recognized and used--begin with the New Testament, then examine the Old Testament, then both Testaments together in order to grasp the full Biblical pattern from the standpoint of the whole Bible whose center is Christ. "Biblical pattern," "whole Bible," and "Christ" are the three key-issues which were emphasized but left undefined. All further work on the problem of Biblical hermeneutics in an Ecumenical theology, it was concluded, "may well begin with the fuller application of this principle."[1] The subsequent conferences and studies on this subject in the progressing

---

[1] Ibid., p. 113.

Ecumenical movement will show, just how far this application was, or could be, carried out.

A third conference convened just before the opening of the Amsterdam Assembly at Zetten in Holland. No further discussion was sought, but merely to "work over the contributions which were already in hand, and to make arrangements of such material as was still seen to be needed."[1] Beyond the immediate need for the Amsterdam Assembly and its study sessions, the need was later on interpreted as (1) to bring out in future debates on hermeneutical issues a number of important points of view still unrepresented; (2) to promote further study of hermeneutical principles which could clarify the still dimly conceived relationship "between the principles of interpretation and the specimens of interpretation of the Bible."[2]

The study sessions at the First General Assembly of the W.C.C. at Amsterdam in 1948 supposedly employed the hermeneutical principles suggested by the preceding conferences. It is outside the scope of this study to determine the extent to which the proposed hermeneutical principles were actually applied. That would be the interesting task of a church-historian. Hardly more than implicit acknowledgements of the preceding conferences on Biblical hermeneutics can be traced in the various publications of the study sessions of the Assembly. The proposed fifth volume on Biblical authority, as a kind of prolegomena to Ecumenical studies

---

[1]A. Richardson and W. Schweitzer (eds.), Biblical authority for today (London: SCM Press, 1951), p. 10/11.

[2]W. Schweitzer, "The Bible and the Church's Message to the World," Ecumenical Review, II, 2 (1950), 129.

(cf. above, p. 31, n. 1), did not appear officially until nearly three years later. It is necessary, however, to call attention to the fact that at Amsterdam in 1948 the Faith and Order movement became a constituent part of the W.C.C., which will be relevant to the interpretation of the progress of the debate on Biblical hermeneutics in the Ecumenical movement after 1948. It must be remembered, however, that not until the Evanston Assembly in 1952 did the executive office of the Faith and Order Commission become a recognized and organized department of the Division of Studies of the W.C.C.

The 1949 annual conference of the Division of Studies[1] at Oxford, England, turned out to be a great success when twenty theologians from eight countries and ten different denominations succeeded in agreeing on a comprehensive outline of definite hermeneutical principles.[2] The agreement was "a result of practical cooperation." But "in the theoretical discussion the participants found themselves in a cul de sac from which there seemed no way out. We simply discovered," one of the study secretaries commented a year later, "how widely separated we were from one another. The difficulties appeared merely to have increased."[3] There was, however, a surprisingly great agreement of fundamental principles when the delegates found themselves engaged in a model exegesis of Jeremiah 7:1-15, the text chosen for a case

---

[1]The "Division of Studies" came to replace the "Study Committee" after the Evanston Assembly in 1954, when an organizational change called for a new name.

[2]Richardson and Schweitzer (eds.), op. cit., pp. 240-43.

[3]Schweitzer, Ecumenical Review, II, 2 (1950), 129.

study. The understanding and interpretation of Scripture, it was agreed, required first of all some theological presuppositions and some basic rules of interpretation; but on the basis, and by the means, of such presuppositions and rules Scripture was also to be made relevant to social and political issues, as well as to the modern world in general, i.e., to modern culture, science, etc. A critical evaluation of the proposed outline of guiding principles for Biblical interpretation must take into account the limited purpose for which the guidance was intended. Biblical hermeneutics is to organize and direct the relevant, authoritative application of Scripture to the life and thought pattern of modern man. The relevance of Biblical hermeneutics for the dogma and liturgy of the Church remained an implicit and unacknowledged issue.

Compared with the discussions at the London and Bossey conferences, the statements made at Oxford emphasize a few new points. First, the doctrinal, denominational presuppositions of an interpreter are part of the "objective" approach to Scripture. The professional theologian or lay interpreter must undertake the task of setting up rules, and of practicing the art, of Biblical interpretation with a stable, conscious loyalty and obligation to the Church to which he belongs. Furthermore, the assertion of previous study conferences concerning Christ as the ultimate criterion of the correct, comprehensive interpretation of the whole Bible, was extended to imply the full Trinitarian faith of the Church which arises out of the Scriptural notion of Christ.[1] Fi-

---

[1]Richardson and Schweitzer (eds.), op. cit., p. 241, par. I (e).

nally, it was reaffirmed explicitly that "any teaching that clearly contradicts the Biblical position cannot be accepted as Christian."[1]

How to bring this "Biblical position" to bear upon the theological and non-theological presuppositions of the interpreter (and vice versa) was emphasized by the Oxford conference of 1949 as one of the major, immediate tasks of Biblical hermeneutics in Ecumenical theology. Hermeneutical principles were said to serve a twofold function[2]--(1) to bring about some kind of a critical awareness of the presuppositions "of which we may be largely unconscious"; (2) to bring the presuppositions to the judgment of Scripture. In both instances, the function of Biblical hermeneutics in the Ecumenical Movement is that of removing "some of the very difficulties which prevent the Gospel from being heard."

In 1951 the W.C.C. published a symposium on "The Biblical Authority for the Churches' Social and Political Message Today," which should have appeared three years earlier (above, p. 31, n. 1). An international group of nineteen theologians and churchmen of different denominations signed a foreword,[3] in which the appeal and urge for the reconsideration of hermeneutical issues in the light of the present-day Ecumenical encounter is accounted for as being rooted in the common, compelling experience of the use of Scripture by Christians everywhere, either in reading and preaching, or in liturgy and other kinds of Christian fellowship, or in charity service. The content of Scripture was

---

[1] Ibid., p. 241, par. I (g).

[2] Ibid., p. 243, par. IV (c).

[3] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

defined as the universal message of man's salvation through Jesus Christ.[1] To interpret the Bible is to unfold its message, as well as to defend it against misinterpretations. The use and interpretation of Scripture were called "the root of all Christian theology,"[2] but, paradoxically, they were also the cause of division in Christendom. If the divided churches were to reunite over the book's message, two kinds of action were deemed necessary to be taken at the present: (1) a better understanding of the nature of the Bible, defined by the Symposium of 1951 as "the testimony of the undivided Church of apostolic times" or "the Word of God";[3] (2) a better application of Scripture in a reunified, undivided witness of the churches to current problems.

Although the Symposium had set out to concentrate on the second point of how to arrive at, and how to maintain, an undivided witness on the basis of Scripture, the first point entered into the debate as a matter of course. What had been set forth so successfully by the Oxford conference of 1949, was now referred to as a document not only of achieved Ecumenical agreement, but also of many still unexpressed points of differences among the member churches of the W.C.C. in their approach to, and application of, the Bible. It was felt now in 1951 that the principles set forth at Oxford, concerning the use and understanding of Scripture, were quite tentative in character; that many points needed still to be reconciled with one another; and that the desirable wider study of the Ecumenical debate on Biblical hermeneutics, which to stimulate was the purpose of the Symposium of 1951, would encourage all Christians of Biblical faith to join

---

[1] Ibid., p. 7. [2] Ibid., p. 7. [3] Ibid., p. 7.

in deepening and focusing the hermeneutical issue in the life and thought of the Church.[1]

The editors of the Symposium, two secretaries of the Study Department of the W.C.C., Alan Richardson and Wolfgang Schweitzer, noted in the Preface they dated a year before the book was published, that the problem of Biblical hermeneutics, "which individual scholars or particular churches, thinking alone, are apt to take for granted, was found to be unavoidable."[2] But in squarely facing the hermeneutical issue now, the Symposium of 1951 re-emphasized at the outset what previous study conferences had declared--that hermeneutics was not to be discussed for its own sake, but only in so far as it "must necessarily precede any realistic consideration of the message of the Bible for the modern world."[3] But it is significant that all of Part Three[4] of the Symposium deals exclusively with hermeneutical theory and its relevance for Church and Theology.

The contribution of the Symposium of 1951 to the Ecumenical debate on the relevance of Biblical hermeneutics for the Ecumenical Movement lies in the attention that was drawn to three important aspects of the problem of Biblical hermeneutics, and in the more or less explicit identification of each of the three aspects with the problem of the nature and purpose of Biblical hermeneutics. (1) Hermeneutical elements are incorporated in the foundations of all Christian theology. The how's and why's of using and interpreting Scripture are identical with the origin

---

[1] Ibid., p. 8.
[2] Ibid., p. 12.
[3] Ibid., p. 12.
[4] Ibid., pp. 157-243.

and purpose of all scientific critical and constructive Christian theology. To agree on universally valid principles of Biblical interpretation is to agree on the normative and critical function of Biblical exegesis as the basis of Ecumenical theological thinking. (2) Hermeneutical issues are the primary factors in the Church's dilemma of a divided witness to the world. To bring the full authority of the whole Bible to bear upon the comprehensive task of witnessing intelligibly and relevantly to modern man of the fulness of Biblical faith, is to assign to Biblical hermeneutics the task of organizing and stabilizing a reunited, undivided witness which will reflect the oneness of the Lordship of Christ over the world, as well as the Biblical oneness of the Churches of Christ in their historical divisions. (3) The problem of Biblical hermeneutics is identical with the whole problem of the Ecumenical Movement and with the problem of the nature and purpose of an Ecumenical theology. To discuss the theoretical and practical implications of theories and methods, designed to bring out the unity of the divine revelation in the Old and New Testament as evident in the very historical, cultural variety of the recorded revelatory events, is to imply that the authority of the Bible is by nature of Ecumenical significance.

The subsequent history of the hermeneutical debate in the study conferences of the W.C.C. will show a continuation of the traditional preoccupation with the second aspect of the problem of Biblical hermeneutics, i.e., with the relevance of hermeneutics for the intensified efforts of reuniting the witness of the churches. But it is the chronological sequence in the Ecumenical debate on hermeneutics which calls our attention first

of all to an important study by an individual representative of the Study Department of the W.C.C. His monograph[1] attempts to bring into focus the issues implied in the first and third aspect of the hermeneutical problem as outlined above, i.e., the issues dealing with the relevance of Biblical hermeneutics for the task of reconstructing Christian theology today, and the task of providing the required foundations for the rising structures of unity in the thinking, worshipping, and witnessing of the member churches of the W.C.C.

Schweitzer's study was the direct outcome and extension of his own contribution to the Symposium of 1951. Schweitzer was well qualified for his task of giving "A survey of the world position on Biblical theology and ethics today"[2] by six years of private studies, and of varied experiences at the study conferences of the W.C.C., in his capacity as one of the secretaries of the Study Department. In the subtitle of his monograph[3] Schweitzer explicitly claims to contribute to the Ecumenical debate on Biblical hermeneutics. In the course of his study, however, he specifies his claim as contributing to only one aspect (Teilproblem) of the admittedly complex hermeneutical problem, i.e., to the implications of the scientific, historic-critical interpretation of Scripture for the dogmatical and constructive task of Christian theology still separately represented by divergent Church traditions.

---

[1]Wolfgang Schweitzer, Schrift und Dogma in der Oekumene (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1953).

[2]Richardson and Schweitzer (eds.), op. cit., pp. 127-54.

[3]It was used as a doctoral thesis in 1951 when Schweitzer

In eight pages of Introduction, Schweitzer outlines the problem rather conventionally, but comprehensively. The origin of Biblical hermeneutics as a problem in Christian theology is identified with the rise of competitive, normative claims of Tradition, Dogma, and Reason in theology beside "Sola Scriptura." The origin of Biblical hermeneutics and the rise of dogmatical theology in the Christian Church are held to be coincident. Schweitzer also believes that the real issue of Biblical hermeneutics did not arise until the Reformation and later. An equally dated opinion is entertained by him when he judges the historical and literary criticism of the eighteenth century to be the first real hazard to the authority of Scripture in theology. How these traditional Protestant notions are challenged by modern Catholic scholarship on the basis of historical and theological arguments will be discussed below in connection with the critical evaluation of Chapter VI of this study.

Distinguished from previous and other contemporary studies on the relation of Biblical hermeneutics to Christian theology,[1] Schweitzer's study is the first attempt of its kind of bringing into focus the significance of hermeneutical issues for the Ecumenical Movement. For Schweitzer the hermeneutical issue has two aspects. One is the problem of how to do justice to the peculiar nature and purpose of the Bible in its Canonical unity and its historical, cultural, religious variety.[2] The other aspect is

---

qualified by it as professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Heidelberg, Germany.

[1]Cf. the works of K. Barth, E. A. Burnier, et al., in the bibliography of Schweitzer's Schrift und Dogma, pp. 309 ff.

[2]Schweitzer, Schrift und Dogma, pp. 15-20.

concerned with the act of understanding and interpreting, with all its presuppositions and conditions.[1] Both aspects together, as well as each one separately, constitute the problematic issue of hermeneutics for Ecumenical theology. The Ecumenical encounter calls for an interpretation of Scripture, and a theory of interpretation as criterion and norm, which does justice not only to the infinite variety of personal or denominational, theological presuppositions, and to the diversity of historical and cultural, religious and dogmatical elements in Scripture, but also to the intrinsic unity of the Biblical revelations as self-disclosures of the Triune God. The developments in Protestant theology have made painfully clear the fact that Biblical hermeneutics not only did not serve its Ecumenical function, but that it became a prey of historism, scientism, and denominationalism. Constructive and dogmatical theology in Protestant Orthodoxy, Rationalism, Pietism, and Liberalism lost their hermeneutical orientation just as much as Roman Catholic Speculative Theology lost all contact with Positive or Historical Theology, which includes the discipline of Biblical interpretation.

In reaction to the evident historical failure in Protestant and Catholic theology of making the authority of Scripture relevant to an Ecumenical theology and witness of the Church, some corrections or new solutions have been proposed which Schweitzer outlines as represented by three groups. There are two extremist solutions, that of the conservatives, fundamentalists, and the like, on the one hand, and that of the "progressivists,"

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 20-22.

liberalists, on the other hand. Conservatives and fundamentalists have in common an inability or unwillingness to accept historical criticism and to integrate it with their doctrinal, confessional preoccupations. The representatives of both groups take refuge either in a rigid "Sola Scriptura"-principle,[1] or in dogmas and ecclesiastical traditions as normative criteria for Scriptural interpretation as well as theological reconstruction.[2] The other extremist solution, which Schweitzer does not identify with any one denomination,[3] is represented by the current trend in constructive theology of ignoring altogether the problem of seeking the authority of Scripture for theology, executing the theological task for today with the reference to more or less unrelated historic-critical studies of Scripture, and/or to a suitable philosophy, psychology, or sociology of religion.[4]

Although both extremes, the Orthodox, Fundamentalist, Pietist solution, and the Liberal solution, had made explicit claims of being Christocentric in their hermeneutical theories, the misrepresentation of Christ either by dogmatical, liturgical, sacramental, metaphysical, or by moral, psychological, social,

---

[1]Ibid., pp. 79-97. The neo-Calvinist and neo-Lutheran orthodoxies flourishing in America, Europe, and South Africa represent this group.

[2]Ibid., pp. 24-78. Roman Catholics, Greek and Russian Orthodox, and Anglicans represent this group.

[3]Ibid., pp. 97-111. H. E. Fosdick serves as the only illustration for this solution which is identified as that of the original Liberalism.

[4]Ibid., p. 18, point 2.

cultural categories neutralized or jeopardized the authority of Scripture by reducing the relevance of Scriptural studies to serve mere illustrative purposes, i.e., to justify the favorite preoccupations of a theology responsive to the traditions of a church or to the "kairos" of a particular culture. In either extreme the normative and critical function of the authority of Scripture in theology could no longer be retained, however piously one tried to prove it by referring to certain theories or practices.

A third approach to Biblical hermeneutics in theology was sought by a heterogeneous group of scholars, such as C. H. Dodd, Reinhold Niebuhr, K. Barth, G. Aulén, E. Brunner, and others.[1] This group has in common that its representatives acknowledge, in one way or another, the validity of some of the hermeneutical principles of Liberalism and Orthodoxy,[2] and that they try, each in his own way, to arrive at Ecumenically valid hermeneutical principles through conscious efforts of harmonizing or transcending the exclusively historical and the exclusively dogmatical approach to Scripture. The results of these individual efforts differ according to the individual choice of approach to, or preconception of, the problem of the relevancy of Scripture in all its diversity as well as its unity. The historically-oriented theologian sees the problem of hermeneutics confined to the question of how to arrive at some kind of value unity implied in the diversities of the historical, cultural, and religious developments of Biblical faith and dogma. The confes-

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 114-232. [2] Ibid., p. 18, point 3.

sional, dogmatical theologian identifies the hermeneutical issue in theology with the problem of how the presumed dogmatical, ethical, liturgical unity of Scripture, affirmed by a theological, philosophical construction or by an ecclesiastical, dogmatical consensus, should be or could be made congruous with the diversities in the Scriptural witness uncovered by scientific exegesis.

Schweitzer, who has personally met and worked with most of the members of this group at the Ecumenical Bible study conferences, freely acknowledges the significant contribution this group of scholars has made to the Ecumenical Movement. In spite of his relentless criticism of Barth's theories, Schweitzer confesses that it was Barth who taught him the relevance of Biblical hermeneutics for the task of reconstructing theology, and that, compared with all the other theologians in Protestant Ecumenism, Barth's contribution to the problem of hermeneutics in Ecumenical theology is "unquestionably the most important and, of its kind, the most convincing one."[1] Schweitzer holds that the contributions of each one of the scholars of this third group stimulated, and were stimulated by, the outcome of two contemporary theological debates: (1) the eschatological dimension of Biblical faith, recovered by historical criticism, and affirmed by contemporary world views and concepts of reality; (2) the elements of "kerygma" and "tradition," recovered by form-criticism, as the criteria and norms for the evaluation of Scripture in Church and Theology.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 182. [2] Ibid., pp. 112-13.

Neo-Liberal and Neo-Orthodox theologians, by recognizing Biblical eschatology, Biblical "kerygma," and the element of tradition as indispensable hermeneutical criteria and norms for theology, abandoned the dogmatic or positivistic ideal of "absolute objectivity." Thus the hermeneutical issue became even more acute to them. For if the eschatological character of the Biblical revelation makes the possibility and purpose of human understanding of himself, of history and reality, appear in a completely new light; and if the "kerygma" is the critical norm by which Scripture and Tradition are to be interpreted, then the very nature of the hermeneutical issue has to be analyzed in a different (i.e., more adequately Biblical) way than it was, and still is done as evident in the diverse, and often antagonistic, Scriptural interpretations set forth by the various Christian churches. The significance of Biblical hermeneutics for the Ecumenical Movement is being realized as yet by most people solely in the growingly conscious obligation to overcome the bewildering diversity in which the authority of Scripture is used to justify ecclesiastical, theological, and cultural traditions. Schweitzer holds that up to the early 1950's both, the theoretical implications of Biblical hermeneutics for a constructive approach to Ecumenical cooperation, and the theoretical issue of the interrelation of Biblical hermeneutics and dogmatics or ethics, on the basis of the hermeneutical implications of eschatology, kerygma, and tradition, have hardly been touched upon outside German speaking, Continental theology.[1]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 113.

How the hermeneutical criteria of Biblical eschatology, "kerygma," and tradition can be misused or inadequately employed, is then shown by Schweitzer in his comprehensive review of the work of the Neo-Liberal and Neo-Orthodox scholars. Partly because of over-zealous polemical or apologetical controversy, e.g., with all kinds of apocalyptic fundamentalism, with the "consistent eschatology" of Albert Schweitzer and company, or with the evolutionistic theories in philosophy and culture;[1] but largely because of an "equilibrium-upset" caused by the failure of bringing the Trinitarian dogma fully to bear upon hermeneutical theory[2]--all systems of Biblical hermeneutics, proposed or presupposed by Neo-Orthodox and Neo-Liberals alike, are held by Schweitzer to be deficient or defective. He objects to the misrepresentations of the hermeneutical issue in theology. He calls for a more truly Biblical, Canonical, but also for a more conscious dogmatical understanding and interpretation of eschatology, "kerygma," and tradition. The closing part of Schweitzer's study demonstrates how this call ought to be issued, and to be responded to, thereby clarifying the hermeneutical issue in Ecumenical theology.

Schweitzer charges that (1) the right hermeneutical relation between event and interpretation becomes distorted (as in the work of Dodd, Niebuhr, Aulén, and others) when the interpretation turns out to be guided, or rather dominated, by Biblically heterogeneous principles ruling over, rather than being ruled by, the event. Such principles may be derived from science, philoso-

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 123 f. [2] Ibid., pp. 294 f.

phy, history, dogmatical or even Biblical theology or tradition. (2) No one particular theological, philosophical, or existential dialectic can serve as fully adequate hermeneutical principle. The unity of the Biblical revelation cannot be demonstrated on the basis of Christology (as K. Barth does). The diversities, complexities and paradoxes of Scripture cannot be identified simply with the incongruity between Biblical mythology and modern scientific world views, or with the dialectic of faith and reason, faith, and experience (as proposed by Brunner, Burnier, Leenhardt in their heuristic, epistemological, and methodological concerns).

Schweitzer judges all hitherto proposed hermeneutical systems as too uniform, too logical, too consistent, and too denominational and un-Ecumenical, compared with the complexity, i.e., the eschatological character, of the Biblical message whose interpretation they are to serve. He emphasizes that, as far as the unity of the Biblical revelation is concerned, most hermeneutical theories provide enough principles of theological or non-theological nature to secure an understanding of Scripture which reflects and maintains the unity of Biblical faith. But, as far as the diversities in Scripture are concerned, i.e., the differences between the Old and the New Testament, and the distinction between the Scriptural Canon and the Ecclesiastical, Dogmatical Tradition, all the hermeneutical and dogmatical theories under discussion fall short in securing the other side of Biblical revelation--the eschatological fulfilment and promise in the history of salvation. This other side, Schweitzer believes, is all too inadequately represented in any of the existing tradi-

tional hermeneutical or dogmatical theories, because they fail to assess the eschatological quality of God's work which transcends human understanding and experience, but becomes subject to rational comprehension only through personal faith in the incarnation of the Son pro nobis and the advent of the eschatological Spirit.[1]

To save Christian theology from bondage to scientific rationalism or irrational fideism, Biblical hermeneutics has its function of continually reassessing the process of human understanding, its nature and scope, in the light of Biblical faith. According to this faith, the self-disclosure of God is experiencable and understandable only in and through the forms of self-concealment that God chose either in the history of salvation of his people (i.e., the history of Israel and the history of the Christian Church) or in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus only out of faithfulness to God's covenants can come an "objective" understanding of the eschatological events and their interpretations. Like faith itself, understanding is ultimately an eschatological event brought about by God's own Spirit.

Though Man's faith and God's Spirit are the two forces to bring about the adequate understanding of the self-disclosures of God in his very self-concealments, one other important element must be accounted for in Biblical hermeneutics, as well as in Biblical dogmatics--the paradoxical element in faith, i.e., the "misinterpretability" and "unverifiability" of the Biblical accounts and of Biblical faith as objectively true, and as eschatologically

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 250-74.

fulfilled, i.e., actually and universally realized or realizable.[1] It is due to this paradoxical character of faith and to the eschatological character of the Biblical revelation, that the historicity, objectivity, and the scientific rational verifiability of faith, as well as of revelatory events, will be forever subject to doubt or misinterpretation. Biblical faith will always be tried and tested by critical inquiry and imaginative insight, the very factors which constitute the understanding and interpretation of faith and revelation. No dogmatical or hermeneutical theory can mitigate the trials of faith. Only the Holy Spirit can. This, too, must be accounted for by Biblical hermeneutics, if it wants to be Biblical and Ecumenical.

Schweitzer's contribution to the debate on the relevance of Biblical hermeneutics for the Ecumenical Movement can be summarized in three points. (1) As expressed in the title of his study, "Scripture and Dogma in the Œcumene," Schweitzer holds that an Ecumenical theory of Biblical hermeneutics "will be impossible as long as there is no dogmatical unity in the Ecumenical Movement."[2] For the dogma of the Church is for him a hermeneutical criterion, subject to Scripture, but Scripture also dependent upon it.[3] (2)An Ecumenical theory of Biblical hermeneutics and Biblical dogmatics must reflect the tension that exists between the unity and the diversity of Biblical faith and Biblical revelation with its eschatological character. Only in the recognized and Canonized diversity of the Bible, in the multiformity

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 250-58.

[2] Ibid., p. 244, n. 11.

[3] Ibid., pp. 274-88.

of the traditions of the Church and its dogma, liturgy, and ethics, and only in the variety of the churches and denominations, now, or not yet, joining in the Ecumenical enterprise, can the unity of the Biblical "kerygma" and the unity of the Christian faith be maintained. This unity is eschatological, i.e., in structure and content exceeding man's natural capacities of reason and emotion.[1] This unity cannot be demonstrated by any hermeneutical theory; ultimately it can only be believed. Biblical hermeneutics, then, serves as an Ecumenical "grammar of faith,"[2] outlining "the indirect manner of speech in which Heilsgeschichte gives expression to the eschaton."[3]

The third important contribution of Schweitzer is his emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the ~~only~~ adequate hermeneutical principle to warrant the right understanding and interpretation of Biblical revelation and faith; that is to say in Schweitzer's words, to warrant that the right balance is kept between the diversity and promise of Heilsgeschichte and the unity and fulfilment of the eschaton. On the basis of this concept Schweitzer argues[4] for three important implications of his thesis relevant to the contemporary debate on how to arrive at Ecumenically valid hermeneutical principles; firstly, a theory of Biblical hermeneutics must bring to bear the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in all action or thought patterns of Theology and Church. Secondly, since the Spirit speaks as it pleases, in the testimonium Spiritus

---

[1]Ibid., p. 297.

[2]The phrase is taken from Ernst Fuchs, Hermeneutik (Bad Cannstatt: Müllerschön, 1954), passim.

[3]Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 298.

[4]Ibid., p. 250.

Sancti internum, personal faith experiences, or in the dogma and tradition of the churches, an Ecumenical theory of hermeneutics must account for these channels of the Spirit, beside Scripture, as valid hermeneutical criteria and norms. Thirdly, the very nature of the eschatological Spirit is incompatible with either extreme of two existing hermeneutical theories, both of which are to be overcome by a genuinely Biblical and Ecumenical conception of hermeneutics. For the scientific positivistic approach and the Roman Catholic approach to hermeneutics both fail to maintain the eschatological character of Biblical faith; the one by taking the Holy Spirit to be structurally and essentially identical with man's intellectual and emotional capacities; the other by institutionalizing, sacramentalizing the Holy Spirit. Thus, in either extreme, the Spirit is objectified, secularized, de-eschatologized, by identifying it with the patterns of thought and faith, of work and witness, of a visible church or a given theological system.

Schweitzer's book was not published until 1953, but still in time for the Evanston Assembly and its theological study sessions. The book's highly technical terminology may have provided one of the reasons why it passed hardly noticed outside Germany. With Schweitzer himself leaving his post as Study Secretary of the W.C.C. soon after the book was completed, there were apparently no advocates for it. The inestimable value of Schweitzer's study lies in its comprehensive outline of the structure and content of the hermeneutical issues that were to emerge as efforts continued in the Ecumenical Movement to make Biblical hermeneutics relevant to the task of discovering, or re-discovering, an Ecumenical theology and witness of the Church.

The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, held at Lund in August, 1952, recognized the hermeneutical issue briefly, but clearly, in Section One of its study entitled "Christ and His Church."[1] It was said[2] that the Church's kerygma (proclamation), koinonia (fellowship), and diakonia (Christian service) must all three be equally subject to certain norms, according to which the right can be distinguished from the wrong, the adequate from the inadequate. It was reaffirmed at Lund that all one hundred and fourteen participating churches accepted the Holy Scriptures "as either the sole authority for doctrine or the primary and decisive part of those authorities to which they would appeal."[3] These other authorities, or hermeneutical criteria, besides Scripture, are for some churches identical with the Inner Light or the leadings of the Spirit without any confessional or dogmatical element. However,

> Most accept the Ecumenical Creeds as an interpretation of the truth of the Bible or as marking a distinctive stage in the working-out of the orthodox faith. Some assign a special importance to the credal documents of the first four General Councils. Many denominations possess confessional documents in which they express the Christian faith as they read it in the Bible. It would generally be admitted, however, that these last documents would not be regarded as irreformable and they do not in fact occupy the same position in the Rule of Faith of all Churches which possess them.[4]

The variety of hermeneutical theories or presuppositions, it was felt, could easily be categorized roughly into two main groups:

> There are among us two distinct emphases upon the relation between Scripture and Tradition. Some would regard Tradition as a living process, whether embodied in written documents or not, continuous with, though not necessarily additional to, the Bib-

---

[1]Oliver S. Tomkins (ed.), The third world conference on faith and order (London: SCM Press, 1953), pp. 236-63.

[2]Ibid., pp. 250 f. [3]Ibid., p. 251. [4]Ibid., p. 251.

> lical revelation, while others would restrict its character to a clarification and exposition of the content of the Biblical Gospel.[1]

It was recognized at Lund that there is some kind of a relation of hermeneutical norms to Christ Himself, but no statement was issued exploring the nature of this relation. The different views held by the representatives of the convening churches concerning the relation of hermeneutical norms to Christology were found "to be of the same order as our differences upon the relation of Christ and His Church."[2] That a great many of those differences were due to "non-theological factors" had been thoroughly discussed at a special pre-Lund conference, held at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in November, 1951,[3] critically evaluating the "many (noticeable) welcome signs of an approximation or even interpenetration of different traditional ways of thinking."[4] The Lund Report clearly implies, but does not probe further into the how's and why's of the implication, that Christology, Ecclesiology, and Biblical hermeneutics not only are relevant each to the others, but also are all three together relevant to the theological issues posed by the Ecumenical Movement.

The Lund Conference on Faith and Order added four perspectives to the debate on the particular relevance of Biblical hermeneutics for the Ecumenical Movement. (1) In calling the Ecumenical encounter necessitated by "new calls and opportunities to

---

[1] Ibid., p. 252. [2] Ibid., p. 251.

[3] Ecumenical Review, IV, 2 (January, 1952), 174-80.

[4] Tomkins (ed.), op. cit., p. 251.

hear the unifying Word of God,"[1] the Conference faced squarely the hermeneutical implications of all the theological and Ecumenical aspirations of the Faith and Order Movement ever since its official organization in 1927. (2) To make and warrant the results of all the unifying activities of the Word of God to be truly organic and ecumenical, hermeneutical norms are to serve one specific purpose--to foster, or to create, the organic unity of the Church, "unified as the Body of the Lord by the unifying power of His indwelling Spirit." In other words, Biblical hermeneutics is relevant to the Ecumenical Movement to the degree in which the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit is brought to bear.[2] (3) The theological and non-theological presuppositions in the understanding and interpretation of that unifying Word of God must receive all due attention, because unrecognized they will impair, but recognized they will accelerate the realization of an organically united, Ecumenical witness of God. (4) In accepting a new constitution for the future organization of the Faith and Order Commission as one of the departments of the Division of Studies of the W.C.C.,[3] the Lund Conference paved the way for all future studies on Biblical hermeneutics in the Ecumenical Movement to be inextricably linked with studies on dogma and worship, on faith and order.

In preparation for the Second Assembly of the W.C.C. at Evanston in 1954, a workbook was published[4] expressing high hopes of "new and larger opportunities for the development of ecumenical

---

[1] Ibid., p. 257. [2] Ibid., pp. 260-61.

[3] Ibid., pp. 359-65.

[4] Assembly Work Book (Geneva: World Council of Churches).

thinking,"[1] one part of which was spoken of as "An ecumenical approach to the interpretation of the Bible so fundamental for all ecumenical studies"[2] (italics mine). It was observed that till 1954 "the main focus has been the interpretation of the Biblical teaching on social questions," but that "these studies could be continued in a wider context." That this context did not include the hermeneutical issues, is made clear by the specifications that follow: the suggestion to focus on the presentation of the Gospel to modern man, and on evangelism, in collaboration with the United Bible Societies. The Work Book makes no provision for possible contributions from the studies of the Faith and Order Commission.

The Faith and Order Commission on its part issued a statement in preparation for the Evanston Assembly,[3] sounding the protest of "some" who criticize the claim that the acknowledgment of the so-called "Basis" of the Constitution of the W.C.C.[4] is the only explicit norm and criterion of membership in the W.C.C. The main objection is found in the absence of any reference to the authority of the Holy Scriptures as part of the Constitution. On the other hand, that same statement sounded the protest of "some" others against "any form of creedal test for membership in the Council." This latter protest would imply, traditionally, but not logically, that for this group of protest-

---

[1] Ibid., p. 60. [2] Ibid., p. 61.

[3] Six ecumenical surveys (New York: Harper, 1954).

[4] Assembly Work Book, op. cit., p. 98: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour."

ers any kind of Scriptural hermeneutical principles would be irrelevant to the Ecumenical task. But then the problem of the norms of Ecumenical faith, which norms and why, becomes all the more acute.

In these two kinds of protest, reflected in this statement of the Faith and Order Commission and intended to be brought to the attention of the Evanston Assembly, a crucial issue calls for attention, the issue of what authority, if any, the W.C.C. has to establish any kind of norm for all believers. The pre-Evanston document of the Faith and Order Commission characterizes the basic attitude of the W.C.C. in its efforts to establish, i.e., to rediscover, hermeneutical, dogmatical, and other norms as follows:

> The Council's purpose is not to embrace the principle that all doctrines and theological concepts are equally true, nor to make ex cathedra statements, but rather to seek the truth by bringing the Churches together to face their differences honestly and seriously.[1]

How comprehensively, but vaguely, the hermeneutical implications in the Ecumenical Movement were perceived by the same Faith and Order document can be seen in a summary statement which calls theologians, pastors, and laymen to "re-educate themselves in the light of the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."[2]

At the Evanston Assembly itself, with its theme of "Christ the Hope of the World" focusing on the eschatological perspective in which "all our human divisions are provisional,"[3] the hermeneu-

---

[1] Six ecumenical surveys, op. cit., p. 45 (First Survey).

[2] Ibid., p. 49 (Sixth Survey).

[3] The Evanston Report (New York: Harper, 1955), p. 89.

tical issue appeared in its genuine Biblical setting. Paul S. Minear, a consultant of the Assembly, who hopefully spoke of the last official study document on Biblical hermeneutics, the Symposium of 1951, as preparing "the way for a strategic advance at the Evanston Assembly,"[1] also had called attention, as Wolfgang Schweitzer did with his book, to "the need for a reshaping of all hermeneutical principles and processes in the light of the promise and hope of Christ's coming."[2] However, it became disappointingly evident that the Assembly reports did not make this need very explicit.

The Faith and Order Commission reported to the Assembly the following results of its studies. One of the obligations of Christians, "being both united and divided," of seeking to be obedient to "the presence of the living Christ" and "the judgment of the Word of God," is for "all to listen together in the midst of our disunity to our one Lord speaking through Holy Scripture."[3] The Ecumenical implication of the hermeneutical issue was described as follows:

> We still struggle to comprehend the meaning and authority of Holy Scripture. Yet whenever we are prepared to undertake together the study of the Word of God and are resolved to be obedient to what we are told, we are on the way toward realizing the oneness of the Church in Christ in the actual state of our dividedness on earth. In this connection we need also to study together the significance of Christian tradition and our various traditions, as reflected in liturgy, preaching and teaching.[4]

---

[1] Ecumenical Review, IV, 3 (April, 1952), 320.

[2] Ibid., p. 321.

[3] Evanston Report, op. cit., p. 90.

[4] Ibid., p. 90.

The Orthodox Church amended this statement by specifying the theological nature and Ecumenical implication of the hermeneutical issue as follows:

> The Orthodox Church cannot accept that the Holy Spirit speaks to us only through the Bible. The Holy Spirit abides and witnesses through the totality of the Church's life and experience. The Bible is given to us within the context of Apostolic Tradition in which in turn we possess the authentic interpretation and explication of the Word of God. Loyalty to Apostolic Tradition safeguards the reality and continuity of church unity.[1]

An explanation of why the Division of Studies had not made special efforts to relate the hermeneutical issue more clearly and explicitly to the general theme of the Evanston Assembly, i.e., to the vital issue of Biblical eschatology, may be found in the committee report on the work of the Division.[2] It reports "considerable discussion" of the problem, whether or not the studies to be carried out under the guidance or stimulation of the Division of Studies should principally and in all ways be related to an over-all general theme, such as "The Mission of the Church into the World," with special emphasis on the "christological interpretation and an ecumenical Biblical approach"[3] of any such theme. The committee declared that whatever general theme was chosen

> it was not meant as a separate topic for study but rather as an indication of the direction in which the various study projects should be undertaken. The Committee was unable to come to a clear decision as to the advisability of such a general theme, the main objection being that a general theme might restrict the flexibility of departmental studies.[4]

Among the recommendations of "general projects" of the Division of Studies, a further study of "an ecumenical approach

---

[1] Ibid., p. 93.
[2] Ibid., pp. 221 ff.
[3] Ibid., p. 222.
[4] Ibid., p. 222.

to the interpretation of the Bible" was called for.[1] But the Bible was not officially, or constitutionally, acknowledged as norm and criterion of Ecumenical unity. In a draft statement on the purpose and function of the Basis, the first article of the Constitution of the W.C.C., it was suggested and then voted on and approved that the Basis shall remain as it was originally formulated at Amsterdam. The only specification of the Basis, as "fundamental criterion," lies in its new dogmatical connotation speaking of "the second person of the Trinity."[2] No one specific dogmatical or confessional criterion, and no reference to Holy Scripture or Tradition, or both, as criterion were acknowledged in the Constitution.

It has been pointed out before that, and how, the hermeneutical issue in the Ecumenical Movement is closely related to the very "ecumenical problem" itself. Visser't Hooft, the General Secretary of the W.C.C., analyzed[3] the "ecumenical problem" as subject, in principle as well as in history, to three main approaches, all of which have strong implications, traditionally and theoretically, for the concept of Biblical hermeneutics and its relevance for the Ecumenical Movement.

One of the approaches is identified with "the Erasmian Tradition."[4] Erasmus is held to be the author of the idea that church unity is possible on the basis of common agreement on a few necessary and fundamental articles of Faith and Order. These

---

[1] Ibid., p. 308. [2] Ibid., p. 306.

[3] Our Ecumenical Task in the Light of History (Geneva: John Knox House Association, June, 1955).

[4] Ibid., pp. 6-8.

fundamentals were felt expressed clearly in the Holy Scriptures.[1] Visser't Hooft cites post-Reformation theologians of all denominations, but especially theologians of the Enlightenment, followed by Modernism "in its various forms," emphasizing that all these theologians "believed equally in a simplification and reduction of the doctrinal requirements for unity."[2] It might be added that the theologians of this tradition all were fond also of designing hermeneutical theories. The work of a modern representative of this group, e.g., Bishop Headlam's proposal at the First Faith and Order Conference at Lausanne in 1927 "to make the creed of Chalcedon together with the Bible the one and only basis for unity," is called by Visser't Hooft "a late echo of Erasmus' teaching."[3] Although the Ecumenical Movement accepted "some of the lessons which the Erasmians had taught," it "could not and would not use this tradition for its basic theory of unity. Visser't Hooft gives as reasons for the rejection of this tradition "Erasmian simplification" or "a basic weakness" which he identifies with a watered-down dogmatical or confessional criterion inadequate to the full Biblical witness. Unfortunately, however, Visser't Hooft does not say what the criterion of adequacy is.

The other approach to the "ecumenical problem" is identified with "the Church-Centered Tradition."[4] In it, not the doctrinal propositions and not the individual faith experience are emphasized as the ultimate criteria, but the norm is seen in

---

[1] Ibid., p. 7.
[2] Ibid., p. 7.
[3] Ibid., pp. 7-8.
[4] Ibid., pp. 8-10.

"God's design in calling his people," which finds its expression in a rediscovered "high doctrine of the Church," where the "uniqueness and givenness of the Church (are) indisputable."[1] Visser't Hooft accounts for the widespread rediscovery of the Church among Roman Catholics, Russian Orthodox, and most Protestants, as the immediate result of modern Biblical scholarship, especially since the First World War. Unfortunately Visser't Hooft again fails, this time by leaving unspecified the precise nature and content of modern Biblical scholarship. He blurs rather than clarifies the issue when characterizing the new consensus in theology simply as the rediscovery of "the Church as the creation of God, as His people," and substantiating his view by referring to the work of a Roman Catholic theologian.[2] The outline of the third approach to "the ecumenical problem," represented by "the Pietist Tradition"[3] with its exclusive interest in the normative value of personal faith experiences, is equally uncritical, lacking any precise account of the theological structure of the normative criteria employed in Pietism.

In summarizing "Our Ecumenical Task To-Day,"[4] a task which implies the search for Ecumenically valid hermeneutical principles, Visser't Hooft reflects, officially so to speak, the kind, the extent and precision of vision which the leaders in the Ecumenical Movement have concerning the "ecumenical problem." It is highly important, indeed, for the execution of the ecumenical task today, not only to realize to what extent and effect the

---

[1] Ibid., p. 8.
[2] Ibid., pp. 9-10.
[3] Ibid., pp. 10-11.
[4] Ibid., pp. 11-15.

three above mentioned traditions have been integrated in the Ecumenical Movement and, in turn, contribute each in its own way to "the ecumenical problem"; but also to decide which of the three traditions is relevant still or no longer. However, it is equally important to make explicit the theological norms and criteria, by which this task is to be executed, and judgment to be passed, that is Ecumenically valid.

When Visser't Hooft dismisses, for instance, Erasmus' concept and the Erasmian tradition as irrelevant for today, "unacceptable and unrealistic," because, as he believes, it does not bring to bear "that fuller unity in faith and order which should characterize the Church of Christ,"[1] he displays a regrettable lack of such explicit and precise theological, Biblical norms as would have given his arguments more convincing and constructive power. He fails to set forth the Biblical norm, according to which the "fuller unity" is eschatological in character. An exposition of what is understood by "eschatological," and how relevant the eschatological character of Scriptural faith is for "the ecumenical problem," has been presented by Wolfgang Schweitzer in his Schrift und Dogma in der Oekumene. When Visser't Hooft points out that the fuller unity cannot be achieved by repristination and fundamentalism, or by ignoring "the great decisions which the churches have taken in their history";[2] and when he calls attention to "that great ecumenical fact" that each church, in its individual history, its dogmas and traditions, is "irreconcilable with the whole context of the other," and thus

---

[1] Ibid., p. 12.

[2] Ibid., p. 12.

implying that the fuller unity is unobtainable at the present, he merely states, empirically and negatively, the results of actual Ecumenical experiences, with or without due and full recognition of the theological and non-theological factors involved. He fails to bring to bear the positive and constructive value of eschatological, Biblical criteria. The reasons why any one of the three traditions analyzed by Visser't Hooft either has fulfilled its role or still can claim significance ought to be sought in the varying degrees of failure or success to make the full content of Scripture and the eschatological character and content of Faith relevant to the recurrent preoccupations in theology with any one of the traditional approaches to "the ecumenical problem." It seems appropriate to call first of all for "the right spiritual attitude to unity,"[1] but this attitude needs clarification about the nature and content of the eschatological revelation and Biblical faith, on the basis of which alone can adequately be accounted for what constitutes, both the unity, as well as the diversity, of the Biblical Canon and the Ecumenical, Ecclesiastical Dogma and Tradition.

Robert Nelson, serving until recently as Secretary of the Division of Studies of the W.C.C., in a personal letter dated October 11, 1956, summed up the progress of the debate on Biblical hermeneutics since Evanston as follows: "The Division of Studies has not produced anything of real importance on this question during the past two or three years, and we know this to be unfortunate." He saw a continuation of the hermeneutical debate

---

[1] Ibid., p. 15.

in a newly-initiated study conference, of which, as a primarily Biblical study, he hoped that it "would give particular attention to the problem of hermeneutics in the ecumenical conversation" (quote Nelson). The published conference report[1] emphasizes two points that were recognized as affecting in different ways the content of Biblical studies: (1) the inevitable, time-conditioned presuppositions on the side of the interpreter; (2) the variety of approaches to Scripture as authority. In relation to both points the delegates to the conference concluded:

> There is agreement that further progress in ecumenical Biblical and theological work will depend upon a frank facing of different ways in which the Bible is interpreted. The Old Testament and the New Testament belong together and cannot be dealt with separately. Beyond this, however, hermeneutical problems will inevitably arise.[2]

The report then recommends the study of eight Scriptural topics, composed of systematic theological concerns, and intended as help or guide to conduct Biblical study "in such a way as to confront them (i.e., hermeneutical problems) constructively." But no attempt is made to probe into the nature of the implied interrelationship between the "mysterious," i.e., the eschatological, character of Christ's Lordship and the problem of understanding and interpretation. This, then, is the degree of attention that was given to the problem of hermeneutics by the end of 1956.

In a full semester course on "The doctrine of the Bible in the different confessions and their practical use of Scrip-

---

[1] The Lordship of Christ over the World and the Church; A Report from the Consultation Held at Arnoldshain (Geneva: World Council of Churches, Division of Studies, 1956).

[2] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

ture," Professor H. H. Wolf, director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey in Switzerland, had lectured in 1955/56 on some hermeneutical issues in the Ecumenical Movement. Reflecting on this lecture, first of its kind at the Ecumenical Institute, Professor Wolf recounts in a private letter dated October 30, 1957:

> The experiences of that Semester at the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies have convinced me that this subject (Oekumenische biblische Hermeneutik) should be focused upon more precisely, in order to provide a better basis for our future studies at the Ecumenical Institute. (Translated from the German original)

Dr. Wolf furthermore confesses that he, who had always insisted on nothing else but actual exegesis to precede any discussion on hermeneutical principles, now holds that his experiences at Ecumenical debates taught him not just to admit, but to call for, as necessary some kind of preliminary hermeneutical orientation, for which he knows, as of now, no better ways and means than those set forth by the Ecumenical Study Conference at Oxford in 1949 (cf. above, pp. 36-37).

This, then, is as far as we need to go in sketching the historical development of the Ecumenical debate on Biblical hermeneutics; partly because the vigorously-starting development has lost considerable momentum by 1957 and seems to have slowed down increasingly since 1952; but also because it now becomes necessary to evaluate the developments and their results as a whole. We have to exclude from this evaluation any attempt, however inviting, of determining the extent and nature of all the responses from churches, church councils, theological schools, and individual scholars to the stimulations issuing from the discussion of Biblical hermeneutics at the Ecumenical Study Conferences

and the official Assembly Study Sessions. The enormous amount of literature that appeared in the last decade on the subject of, or related to, Biblical hermeneutics, surveyed in bibliographies compiled by the Division of Studies[1] and the Bureau of Research and Survey,[2] makes evident the mutual influence of the Ecumenical debate on Biblical hermeneutics upon the revived interest in hermeneutics in the life of the churches and in theological research, and how this revived interest, in turn, stimulated the Ecumenical debate.

The striking absence of any substantial development in the debate on hermeneutics during the last five years can be accounted for, in part, by the confused situation of having the work of the Study Department of the W.C.C. remain unrelated to the work of the Faith and Order Conferences. In theory, at least, this handicap was eliminated by a mutual agreement at Evanston to merge the two theological study programs. Another factor that hampered the progress of the hermeneutical debate may be seen in the persisting preoccupation of the W.C.C. with urgent practical issues, mainly that of helping the churches in their efforts to respond to the challenge of why and how to make Christian faith and ethics relevant to modern man. But to keep on qualifying "Christian faith" in terms of "Biblical faith" actually meant to keep the hermeneutical problem alive in even the most practical issues of contemporary theology.

---

[1] List of publications and study documents (Geneva: World Council of Churches, November, 1956; Mimeographed).

[2] Information service, Vol. XXXV, No. 31 (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., September 29, 1956).

Before we can assess the "ecumenical" implications of Biblical hermeneutics, we must summarize all the hermeneutical issues that actually have been raised in the Ecumenical Movement and in the theological program of the C.U.U.B. of the N.C.C.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY OF THE HERMENEUTICAL ISSUES

In the short life span of the ambitious program of the Committee on the Use and Understanding of the Bible, sponsored by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., there emerge (see above, pp. 17ff.) the following implications of Biblical hermeneutics, of the right use and understanding of the Bible: (1) the Bible, rightly and fully understood and used, appears to all Christian readers with some universal, practical ethical demands--and contemporary ethical issues can be met, and answered only by a rightly understood Bible, rightly applied; (2) the right use of the Bible implies its devotional use, both, as far as the individual Christian in all the various denominations is concerned, as well as the ecumenical use and application of the Bible in interdenominational forms of worship and liturgy; (3) the right use and understanding of the Bible has therapeutical implications in private or group studies of the Bible. The emotional, mental maturity and adjustments, required of an individual Christian or a Christian group, to meet the emotional needs of those who seek help, and to perform the therapeutic function of the comforting, healing Word of God, are provided by the right use of Scripture.

In the ten years of hermeneutical debate among the members of the World Council of Churches, the following hermeneutical im-

plications or issues were developed. (1) A wide variety of theological and non-theological presuppositions was recognized as shaping, or distorting, the use and understanding of the Bible. Loyalty to merely "a church," or "a tradition," was repudiated; but loyalty to "the Church," "the Tradition" (identified with "Apostolic Succession," "Canon," and the like) was advocated by all. (2) The Hermeneutical principle for all Christian theologians is Jesus Christ as defined in the Constitution of the W.C.C., but understood as the second person of the Trinity. And yet, it is agreed by all, that the hermeneutical principle for an Ecumenical interpretation of the Word of God in the Bible shall not be, and cannot be, any one doctrine or dogma about Jesus, but solely Jesus Christ Himself as a living, present reality. (3) The purpose of Biblical hermeneutics for the life, thought, and the unity of the witness of the churches of the W.C.C. is twofold--for one, it is to secure that the Biblical message is rightly and fully unfolded and used; on the other hand, hermeneutical theory is a welcome means of defense of the right and full meaning of the Bible against its traditional or contemporary misinterpretation or misrepresentation. (4) Hermeneutical principles are to aid not only in a progressive, better understanding of the historical, as well as the spiritual nature of the Bible, but also, and primarily so, in a better application of the content of Scripture (both ethically and religiously, doctrinally) to the Church and to the world. (5) If, then, exegesis and theology are taken as synonyms (Christian is what is Biblical, and vice versa), a theory of exegesis, i.e., Biblical hermeneutics, must then also be related to the theory of theology, i.e., what the nature and

function of Christian theology is as scientific and Biblical theology. (6) The theoretical, theological endeavors of establishing, i.e., of understanding and presenting persuasively, the unity of the Bible bears upon the Ecumenical endeavor of establishing the unity of the Church.

In the work of Wolfgang Schweitzer, the former Secretary of the Division of Studies of the W.C.C., we have the most advanced systematic attempt of probing into the nature of the relationship of Biblical hermeneutics and Ecumenical theology. The following four points summarize the points of view concerning the interrelationship of hermeneutics and ecumenics as they appear to Schweitzer.

1. Unity is a faith category. The unity of divine-human authorship in the issues of the inspiration and the authority of Scripture; the unity of the Canon of the Old and New Testaments; the unity of Biblical theology; the unity of the churches in dogma, ethics, worship and witness; of each one of these "unities" Schweitzer holds that they cannot be demonstrated to, or forced upon, anyone, whether a Christian or non-Christian, whether the means of demonstration are rational, traditional, institutional, or dogmatical ones. Unity is where Faith is. But what is Faith?

2. If faith is the understanding and interpretation of the revelatory event and its meaning, then faith is a hermeneutical category. The concept of what Christian faith is, or ought to be, and the theoretical concerns in Biblical hermeneutics are both determined by two significant specifications (which make for the distinction between faith and Christian faith, hermeneutics and Biblical hermeneutics): on the one hand, by the special, unique <u>kind</u> of revelatory event, i.e., the eschatological revela-

tion of God and the Spirit realized in and through the historical Jesus; on the other hand, by the special _way_ in which this eschatological revelation is made relevant and intelligible, namely in the "kerygma" and the Tradition of the Church. It is not the _fact that_ "revelation" or "faith" determine the issues of hermeneutics and ecumenics, but the conviction of what _kind_ of revelation and interpretation, what _kind_ of faith and unity, and what _ways_ of communicating "the" event and its meaning. The Christian concept of revelation and the Biblical concept of eschatology on the one hand; and the concepts of the Christian "kerygma," tradition, Canon, and the like--these two constitute what is termed either the hermeneutical implications of ecumenics, or the ecumenical implication of hermeneutics.

3. Christian unity and Christian faith are subject, however, not only to whatever pure kind of revelation and "kerygma" the theologians say there are, but also subject to a lot of divergent, often contradictory human presuppositions. These presuppositions of man, as individual or group, as Christian or non-Christian, as Church or society and culture, have entered into the very first processes of receiving and interpreting the original revelation and "kerygma." These presuppositions or pre-understandings (_Vorverständnis_) of man are an integral part of his religious life and determine man's understanding and interpretation of revelation, "kerygma," faith, unity, and the like, as each bears upon man's, or the Church's concept of self. In fact, a great deal of the various _kinds_ of faith, revelation, and "kerygma"-concepts in the various churches are due to such presuppositions, as are the varieties within the Bible itself.

This matter has often consciously or unconsciously been avoided for fear of losing respect for faith and religion itself, because it revealed them as thoroughly permeated with cultural, existential, philosophical, or theological, ecclesiastical presuppositions. For Biblical hermeneutics to insist on probing into this matter and prying it open and to discuss it in the light of none other criterion than the Biblical record itself, is to justify its claims of having ecumenical relevance, because it contributes scientifically as well as emotionally, but not sentimentally, to the goal of overcoming old or new denominational, sectarian, unecumenical barriers of sentiment and tradition.

4. The theory of principle, upon which Schweitzer bases the ecumenical implications of Biblical hermeneutics, is the complex dogmatical affirmation of the unity of God, Christ, and the Spirit. The unity of faith and reason, of faith and history, of symbol and reality, of nature and grace, and the like; as well as the unity of the Biblical witness, and the unity of the Church and its witness--every kind of unity is methodologically, epistemologically, and theologically relevant and intelligible only on the basis of the Biblical affirmation of the Trinity. To understand the nature, and the activities, of God in Christ, and of the Spirit as of God and of Christ; to understand the Christian revelation, the revelation in Jesus Christ, the revelation in Old and New Testaments as one Canon--this, for Schweitzer, is the ecumenical, theological dimension of Biblical hermeneutics that, according to his vision, has emerged in the hermeneutical debates of the Ecumenical Movement.

Impressive and poignant as this kind of an analysis and

summary can be, because it is presented by an individual theologian instead of by a committee, it, nevertheless, leads to false impressions, as if the participants in the Ecumenical Movement would say, or had said, what Schweitzer says. In many points, it is true, the official declarations of the Ecumenical Study Conferences agree, or come close, to what Schweitzer maintains, but there still are a host of problems concerning Biblical hermeneutics that, though they have been discussed Ecumenically and Biblically, have not been agreed upon. The actual discussions of hermeneutical issues that representatives of the various churches engaged in during the two Ecumenical Study Conferences at London and Bossey (see above, pp. 27-34) reflect very clearly some of the major problem areas where no agreement could be recorded as yet.[1]

1. The normative hermeneutical value of the Tradition of the Church, or the problem of the Protestant concept of a magisterium ecclesiae. The debates about this important issue raised three questions. (a) In what way does God, who self-revealed Himself in the Scriptures, continue to self-reveal Himself in the Church? If it is by way of the Holy Spirit, how do Letter and Spirit and Tradition and Spirit relate to each other? No conclusive answer was found. (b) If Scripture cannot speak for itself, but needs the witness of the Church to proclaim, that is to interpret it, is therefore Scriptural tradition and Scriptural confession, the dogmatical, confessional status of the Church, identical with Scripture? And is the unity in Scriptural interpreta-

---

[1]See "From the Bible to the modern world," op. cit. (see above, p. 28, n. 1), pp. 31 ff. and 84 ff.

tion identical, or to be made identical, with the creeds and dogmas of the Church? The general reaction to these questions was negative. The danger (latent and perpetual) for Protestants to yield to Roman Catholic principles was pointed out. But no constructive view was presented or agreed upon. (c) If Scripture is the result of the oral tradition of the early Church, as form-criticism has it, can the Church make her claim on this basis as being authorized exclusively so to interpret the Scriptures? Isn't the creation of the Canon of Scripture by the Church a case in point that the Church is the only legitimate interpreter of Scripture? The debates came to no positive conclusion.

2. Just as questionable as the normative value of Tradition proved to be the problem of the normative hermeneutical value of reason or natural revelation in establishing the authority of Scripture. Everyone agreed that reason in its proper place had its validity in interpreting as well as understanding God's self-communication; but there was dissention over the question whether reason and natural revelation had normative value for an ecumenically authoritative interpretation of Scripture.

3. The hermeneutical value of the Canon of Scripture was another unfinished point in the Ecumenical debate. The basic question was whether the general recognition and acknowledgment of one and the same Scriptural Canon could be taken as a normative hermeneutical principle. The debates yielded here the same tentative answers as they did concerning Tradition. On the one hand, the Canon of Scripture, as Tradition, being the result of or identical with the doctrinal developments of a particular, historical church, must not be identified as the <u>formal</u> criterion

of unity. This was rejected by all. On the other hand, it was agreed that the Canon contained a universally-acknowledged "material" criterion, that of testifying to Christ. Yet, no agreement could be reached as to how to define the Biblical testimony to Christ, as distinguished or distinguishable from the dogmatical, denominational testimony.

4. The relation of the Old and New Testament was another hermeneutical issue that took first rank in the debates. All agreed that "Christ" is the hermeneutical focal point upon which the interpretation of the unity of the two Testaments is to be based. But the delegates could not agree on a Biblical definition of Christ. The same holds true of two related problems, the problem of typology and that of fulfilment. The debaters' personal, or ecclesiastical, viewpoints about eschatology, Heilsgeschichte, the meaning and extent of inspiration, and other aspects, determined the respective answers that were suggested. The unity of the two Testaments was identified with the dialectic of Promise and Fulfilment, of Law and Gospel, the dialectic within God Himself which calls for the so-called "Christocentric" interpretation. It was generally agreed to recognize as element of unity that God was in Christ. In looking at any other factor of unity, such as the Biblical witness itself with its variety of historical, literary, religious, ethical, cultural patterns, the delegates confessed to see nothing but problems.

5. It may be surprising that the problem of inspiration was discussed at all, but it may not surprise to find that various Protestant traditions represented at the debate could not come to any agreement on this question. The underlying problem,

that of the relation of Infallible God to fallible Man, was rightly perceived; but only a negative consensus was reached--God and Man should not be confused. But that was all the Study Conferences ventured to say on this issue.

6. The very nature and purpose of rational, critical interpretation of the Bible in the service for Christ and His Church was debated at length. On the one hand, the necessity of Scriptural exegesis on the basis of historical and philological work was recognized, with differing degrees of recognition depending on the cultural or spiritual background of the representative theologian. On the other hand, it was agreed that the ideal of scientific objectivity, through rational scientific exegesis, was to be regarded as an anachronism as far as the use of Scriptural interpretation for fostering ecumenical relations was concerned.

The over-all impression that one gets by looking at this summary of hermeneutical issues in the Protestant Ecumenical Movement is that "the Church," i.e., the group of churches pledged to Ecumenical cooperation, has become aware, in varying degrees, of the necessity of looking at the issues of Biblical hermeneutics as they bear upon the efforts of making all churches united by recognizing one common authority for all. What this authority <u>should</u> be is the subject matter that is debated in Biblical hermeneutics. In this field of scientific, theological work the churches recognize not only that this common authority is the revelation of God in history, in Jesus, in the Church, in the Bible, but also that this revelation, this authority, is inextricably linked with all sorts of elements, human, historical, cul-

tural, religious, moral, dogmatical, ecclesiastical, liturgical, etc.

In the program of the American and Canadian C.U.U.B. we have seen (above, pp. 17-26) the American version of the contemporary revival of hermeneutical interests in Protestantism. In retrospect, and in comparison with the work of the W.C.C., we can characterize the American efforts as follows:

1. On the one hand, whatever concern there is for Biblical hermeneutics, implicitly or explicitly, it appears to be limited to practical, ethical issues. Hermeneutical concerns are determined by the question whether and how the right use and understanding of the Bible affect our common Christian moral responsibility or our devotion, respectively. Even such an approach to hermeneutics as this one does prove at least one point, that Biblical hermeneutics does have some relevance, or relevance of some kind, for the dynamics and goals of the interchurch movement in Protestantism.

But, largely due to the lack of integrating the results of the labors of the Division of Studies of the W.C.C., there is no sign yet in the program of the American C.U.U.B. of treating the relevance of Biblical hermeneutics more comprehensively, that is more theologically. Doctrinal and dogmatical issues have consciously been avoided, mainly because of pragmatic precautions against the constant fear of latent threats of further division, or new disruption, in the precious unity brought about not so long ago. Comparing, however, the ambitious program of the C.U.U.B. with the past history of American Protestant denominationalism, one must concede that this program is aiming at ideals, Ecumenical and

Biblical, which would have been incomprehensible only a few decades ago.

2. On the other hand, however, comparing the work of the C.U.U.B. with the wider scope and depth with which the relevance of Biblical hermeneutics is pursued by the Division of Studies of the W.C.C., one realizes that the promotion of the right use and understanding of the Bible by the C.U.U.B. will scarcely be able to accomplish its ultimate goal (of recasting the content, structure, and formulation of the Christian faith and of church unity), unless the full extent of the ecumenical and theological implications of Biblical hermeneutics is recognized. To admit, not merely on practical grounds, but theoretically, that the interpretation of the Bible is, and should be, the Ecumenical motive for all Protestant interchurch projects, is to invite the theoretical discipline of Biblical hermeneutics to come into its own. This invitation has not been extended. The complexity and comprehensiveness of the hermeneutical implications that arise with the demand to keep, or make, the Bible the focal point of interchurch projects, has not been fully realized. Furthermore, there is no sign yet in the theological orientation of the program of the C.U.U.B. of assigning the task to scientific critical agent for the Church and the self-examination of her laudable preoccupation with the unity of the churches and with the unity of the Christian witness.

In the development of the work of the Division of Studies of the W.C.C. and of the Faith and Order Movement, motivated by an increasing understanding of the role of Scripture in the life and thought patterns of the churches seeking to get and stay to-

gether, attempts were made to face all the issues that arise with the common recognition of the authority of Scripture. To face such issues was to engage deliberately in defining theologically and ecumenically such hermeneutical issues as the unity of Old and New Testament, the relation of Canon and Tradition, the problem of inspiration, and the criteria of determining the literal, spiritual, typological, and liturgical sense of a word, or passage, or book of Scripture. All this has not even started yet in the work of the C.U.U.B. And yet, the execution of the task that the C.U.U.B. set itself (the task, not only of promoting the principles, and means, of the right use and understanding of the Bible, but also of bringing into realization the ecumenical relevance of this task) may well depend upon the degree in which all the facets of Biblical hermeneutics are recognized and realized.

The subsequent part of my study attempts to show the degree in which the theological and ecumenical (Catholic) implications of Biblical hermeneutics have been realized, and propagated, by contemporary Roman Catholic theology.

PART II

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS IN MODERN ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

CHAPTER V

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1870

In this chapter no attempt will be made to decide whether or not, or in which way, the Biblical renaissance in modern Catholicism is related to, or dependent upon, the spiritual, theological, liturgical and institutional renaissance of the Catholic Church since the Vatican Council of 1870. Analogous to the presentation of Biblical studies in Ecumenical Protestantism (Part I of this study), this part, too, will not be concerned with the actual results of the new emphasis on Biblical studies, but is concerned mainly with the theories and principles according to which the Bible is to be used and understood in the Catholic Church of today. The intriguing question, whether Roman Catholicism actually lives up to its own hermeneutical theories, goes beyond the scope of this study.

The motives behind the revival of Biblical studies in modern Catholicism are manifold. Sharing with the parallel revival of Biblical studies in Ecumenical Protestantism many of the motives as outlined above (see above pp. 8-16), there are, however, some motives peculiar to Roman Catholicism:[1] (1) the studies of Patristic Biblical interpretation, e.g., by de Lubac,

---

[1]R. E. Brown, The Sensus Plenior of sacred Scripture (Baltimore: St. Mary's University Press, 1955), pp. 66 f.

Daniélou, et al.; (2) the attention that was given to the use and understanding of Scripture in the renewed study of the liturgical tradition of the Church and of the monastic, ascetic traditions (the studies of Congar, Chifflot, Charlier, et al.); (3) a literary interest in the Bible, as in the work of Claudel et al. In addition to these motives, it will be necessary to evaluate the heritage of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, in order to understand the recent developments and the present status of the theological, scientific discipline of Biblical hermeneutics in Catholicism.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was the time when the conservative and progressive elements among Catholic Biblical scholars began to engage in such a fight over the nature and purpose of hermeneutical principles that made the Holy See finally intervene to restore order. Despite all controversy, the opposing parties kept, and were called by the Pope to keep, united on the basis of the fundamental and traditional hermeneutical principle set forth by the Trent and Vatican Councils according to which it is sancta mater Ecclesia cuius est iudicare de vero sensu et interpretatione Scripturarum Sanctarum.[1] The "conservative" group was represented by such distinguished scholars as Cornely, Hummelauer, Kaulen, Knabenhauer, Rebbert, and F. Schmid of Germany and Austria; Brucker, Corluy, Lamy, and Vigouroux of Belgium and France; Franzelin and González of Italy and Spain. On the "progressive" side we find d'Hulst, Lagrange, Loisy, and others. Frequent attempts have been made to probe

---

[1]Concilium Vaticanum, oecum. XX (1869-70), sess. 3, cap. 2.

into the doctrinal and philosophical associations and traditions reverberating in each of the two groups, or even in each of the individual theologians of a particular country.[1]

As the "Question Biblique" took on a "caractère angoissant,"[2] Pope Leo XIII (1878 to 1903) began to approach modern critical study of Scripture more constructively than his predecessor Pius IX who had tried to stem the tide of scientific hermeneutical principles, accepted by some Catholic exegetes, by including these hermeneutical innovations in his Syllabus of modern errors of 1864.[3] A focal point of development since 1875 became the Université Catholique (since 1880 the Institut Catholique) in Paris under the presidency of Maurice d'Hulst. This institution was designed to practice and to demonstrate methodologically and epistemologically the Catholic principles for all academic pursuits. In an encyclical letter of August 4, 1879, entitled Aeterni Patris,[4] Leo XIII identified these principles with Thomistic philosophy. In February 1882, Leo XIII applied his policy to theological education by urging the archbishops and bishops of Italy, in his encyclical letter Etsi Nos,[5] to re-

---

[1]Cf. e.g., article by G. Weigel, S.J., in Theological Studies, XII (1951), 212 ff. See E. Mangenot and I. Rivière, "Interprétation de l'Écriture," Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, Vol. VII, 2 (Paris, 1923), coll. 2290-321.

[2]G. Courtade, in Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément, fasc. XXV (1952), col. 375.

[3]Enchiridion Biblicum, ed. by Pontifical Biblical Commission (Rome: Arnodo, 3rd ed. 1956), No. 75. (Hereafter referred to as E.B.)

[4]English translation in Catholic World, XXX (Oct. 1879), 111-31.

[5]Acta Sanctae Sedis, XIV (Rome, 1882), 337-45.

form theological studies not only by introducing better instructions in natural sciences, but also by providing more adequate means of dealing with the interpretation and auctoritas of Scripture.

While the conservatives continued to present the nature of Biblical revelation, and the necessity and usefulness of hermeneutical principles, by adding new books to an already impressive list of hermeneutical textbooks that were available in the late nineteenth century,[1] the more progressive scholars ventured to integrate the results of modern science with Biblical studies. One of the foremost representatives is Cornely[2] who profoundly influenced both Lagrange and d'Hulst. The "conservatives" had their spokesman in Vigouroux. He became the secretary of the Biblical Commission in 1890, appointed by Leo XIII. As professor at the Institut Catholique in Paris he began to edit in 1891 the first parts of the Dictionnaire de la Bible,[3] which even today in its supplemented form[4] still is one of the basic reference works for Catholics when it comes to Scriptural studies.

The more "progressive" Biblical scholars found their representation in the École Biblique, founded in 1890 by Lagrange, and in the publication of the Revue Biblique Internationale since

---

[1]See bibliography in Dictionnaire de la Bible, ed. F. Vigouroux, Vol. III (1912), cols. 630-33.

[2]R. Cornely, Historica et critica introductio in utriusque Testamenti libros sacros, Vol. I (Paris, 1885); pp. 510-93 on hermeneutics.

[3]Completed in 5 vols. in 1912; 3rd ed. 1926.

[4]Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplement (hereafter referred to as D.B.S.), ed. L. Pirot et A. Robert, Vol. I (Paris, 1928--).

January, 1892, under the editorship of Lagrange, who had stated the objective of his journal in its first issue as concerned with the promotion of everything that could contribute to a better use and understanding of the Bible. By "everything" he included such items as Semitic philology, history of the Orient, Biblical geography and archeology, the study of ancient literature, the contributions of scholastic and mystical theology to the interpretation of Scripture, the history of exegesis, etc. In 1892 another Biblical periodical began to appear, entitled L'Énseignement Biblique, which was more popular in its aim to reach students of theology, priests, and the educated laity; it was in this journal that Loisy published many of his articles. In January, 1893, d'Hulst came out with his "La Question Biblique," advocating a more liberal and more scientific scope of hermeneutical theory for the benefit of an even more genuinely Catholic interpretation of Scripture.

This, then, is the immediate background of Leo's encyclical Providentissimus Deus[1] issued on November 18, 1893, the turning point in the development of Biblical studies in modern Catholicism. A broader and more detailed picture of "The antecedents of the encyclical Providentissimus Deus"[2] would reveal, according to Cotter, some of the more subtle historical, cultural, ecclesiastical, and theological forces that led to, or culminated in, this encyclical. Historical analysis also of the response to

---

[1] E.B., Nos. 81-134.

[2] A. C. Cotter, S.J., in The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, V (1943), 117-24. I. Rivière, "Une curieuse anticipation de l'encyclique Providentissimus Deus," Revue des sciences religieuses, I (1921), 149 ff.

Leo's pronouncements, but also became so intensified that it developed, within a few years, into the paralyzing controversy over "modernism."

What can be said of Leo's main concern in his Providentissimus Deus is also true of the other two great Biblical encyclicals by Benedict XV and Pius.XII (see below, pp. 106 ff. and 122 ff.) all three, in spelling out the official answers to "The Biblical Question," have a "double dessein": for one, to "preserver l'intégrité de la foi"; but also to "imprimer aux études scripturaires un élan nouveau."[1]

In Providentissimus Deus, Leo XIII outlines the Catholic approach to Biblical studies by first repeating the traditional Catholic definition of what the Bible is and what its relation is to revelation and to tradition. God has revealed himself tum in sine scripto traditionibus, tum etiam in libris scriptis.[2] The Biblical writings are "letters" given to humano generi longe a patria peregrinanti a Patre caelesti (E.B., No. 81). Christian theology is concerned, in part, with the tueri et interpretare of these "letters" (ibid.). The right study of the Bible, advocated by Leo XIII, is designed not only to make the Bible accessible "safely and abundantly ad utilitatem dominici gregis," but also to protect the Bible from misuse or misunderstanding (E.B., No. 82). Then follows an outline, first of why, then of how, the Bible ought to be used and understood.

The reasons for studying the Bible are on the one hand

---

[1]G. Courtade, "Lettres Encycliques," D.B.S., fasc. XXV (1952), coll. 375-87.

[2]Concilium Vaticanum, oecum. XX (1869-70), sess. 3, cap. 2.

praeter ipsius praestantiam atque obsequium verbo Dei debitum; on the other hand, because praecipua causa inest in multiplici utilitatum genere (E.B., No. 84). The right study of Scripture proves useful in two ways: it yields a growth of the doctrinal (and liturgical) understanding of what Christ is (the Bible is the viva et spirans imago eius--E.B., No. 86); and it also yields auctoritas to preaching (E.B., Nos. 87-89). Hermeneutically, the prerequisite or right disposition for receiving such benefits from Biblical studies are non solum mens docilis atque attenta, sed integrae quoque piaeque habitus voluntatis (E.B., No. 89). It may come as a surprise to the Protestant or the historian to have the Pope voice the claim (E.B., Nos. 90-99) that the Catholic Church always has insisted on the right use and understanding of the Bible. But only idonei viri should be entrusted with it. Leo XIII reminds the world that the Catholic Church has progressively been cultivating the study of Scripture over the centuries, and that the cultus ille Scripturae Sacrae has proved, and still is (or, at least, ought to be), vividus et plurimae ferax utilitatis (E.B., No. 90). In conclusion, Leo considers it fair to say that the Church "never failed in taking due measures to bring the Scriptures within reach of her children," and that for the continued right use and understanding of the Bible the Church "never had need, nor has she now, of any externorum hominum incitamentis."[1]

On these premises, then, is outlined and established the double purpose of Biblical hermeneutics for Roman Catholicism:

---

[1]E.B., No. 99, translation from Rome and the study of Scripture, 5th ed. (St. Meinrad, Ind., 1953), p. 10.

on the one hand (E.B., Nos. 100-15), the right use and understanding of Scripture (legitima interpretatio) is probare, exponere, illustrare the doctrinam catholicam (E.B., No. 100); on the other hand (E.B., Nos. 116-32), it is to assert the auctoritas integra of Scripture, a task equal in importance and required work, as the first one mentioned (E.B., No. 116). Another reason and purpose for employing hermeneutical principles is to secure the right interpretation over against all non-Catholics. While for Leo XIII all previous non-Catholic, Christian interpretation of Scripture was based entirely on some kind of iudicium privatum, the modern challengers of Roman Catholic hermeneutics are characterized as Rationalisti (E.B., No. 100) who deny revelation, the very nature of religion.

The antiqua et vera scientia of interpreting Scripture rightly is known only by the Roman Catholic Church who received this science directly from Christ through the Apostles; and it is the Catholic interpreter alone who can, and must, claim to be the idoneus defensor Scripturae Sacrae (E.B., No. 102). The right hermeneutical orientation is summarized by Leo XIII with special emphasis on the following points:

1. The theological education in seminaries and academical institutions is to include and integrate, more so than before, the study of Scripture. Thirteen years later Pius X came out with a whole new program of Biblical studies in seminaries (E.B., No. 103), and also a more comprehensive and more penetrating Biblical exegesis for theological students, to be presented in such a way as to let the student learn the methodology of pariter Libris Divinis tuendis atque arripiendae ex ipsis sententiae

(E.B., No. 104). Exegetical methodology and Biblical introduction or hermeneutics, to be studied "with the guidance and help of theology," will enable the student (1) to prove (convincere) the integritas and auctoritas of the Bible; (2) to investigate and to acquire the legitimum sensum of Scripture; (3) to refute objections (occupare captiosa et radicitus evellere). The teaching of Scripture "should result in a definite and ascertained method of interpretation."[1]

2. Then, there ought to be used only one standard text, which for Catholics, since the definition given at the Council of Trent,[2] is the text of the Vulgate version. But the study of other ancient texts and versions also is held to be profitable (E.B., No. 106).

3. The next step is that of scrutandae et proponendae sententiae (E.B., No. 107). In scrutinizing the text for its sententia, Catholics are requested to observe the probata communiter interpretandi praescripta (E.B., No. 107); and by these hermeneutical rules that are "generally approved of" are understood not only the rules of principles accepted generally by secular science, but also those canons of interpretation generally approved of by the Church, its tradition and its present teaching magisterium.

4. Finally, the problem of the right use and understanding of the Bible is identified with the very problem of the Possibility and necessity of Christian theology (E.B., Nos. 108-15). Her-

---

[1] E.B., No. 105, translation from Rome and the study of Scripture, p. 12.

[2] Concilium Tridentinum, sess. iv (cf. E.B., No. 61).

meneutical principles are designed to check the use of Scripture in re theologica (E.B., No. 108). Basic for Catholic hermeneutics is the concept that the verba of Scripture express res multae which humanae vim aciemque rationis longissime vincunt. Sharing with all other Christian theologians the problem of how to relate littera and sententia, word and meaning, Letter and Spirit, and how to relate hermeneutical theory to the actual, or virtual, sensus of a word, passage, or a whole book, the Catholic interpreter is to let himself be guided by two considerations (E.B., No. 108): (1) what the littera seems to express, and what hermeneuticae leges seem to indicate are not always the ampliore et reconditiore sententia; (2) the litteralis sensus sometimes admits alios praeterea sensus which are good for "illustrating dogmas and for commending ethical conduct."

The puzzling fact that man does not always understand everything the Bible says, i.e., the fact of certain obscurities, is explained by Leo XIII, with reference to Patristic statements on this issue, as reflecting a divine purpose. No one can, or should, use and understand the Bible except with the help of the Church as dux and magister. To acknowledge the Catholic Church as the only "leader" and "teacher" in matters of Biblical interpretation is not to narrow the scope of Biblical studies, as Leo assures the faithful, but rather is to protect Biblical interpretation from error and to assist it ad veram progressionem (E.B., No. 109).

To recognize the Catholic Church as "leader" and "teacher" in all Biblical interpretation is to acknowledge that the Church has the right to give an expositionem certam et definititam of

every word, passage, or book of the Bible. In quite a few instances the Church has given such expositions of texts as the sensus authenticus. And when a Catholic interpreter is, nevertheless, charged with applying all hermeneutical tools of his trade to the interpretation of a text which is already authentically defined, then he is not to do so in search of new meaning over and beyond the authentic meaning, but to do so in order to prove that the Church's decision concerning a text is, according to sanae hermeneuticae leges, the sola interpretatio, the only right and true interpretation (E.B., No. 109). In all other text interpretations, where the Church has not yet declared the authentic sense, the exegete is to follow the summa norma of all interpretation, the analogia fidei. Whenever an interpretation of Scripture results in either making the inspired authors appear to contradict each other, or opposing the doctrines of the Catholic Church, that interpretation is "inept and false" (E.B., No. 109).

With reference to Rufinus, Leo XIII argues for the exegesis of the Church Fathers as normative, because they had received ex apostolica successione the regula intelligendi (E.B., No. 110). And besides sharing in the Apostolic Succession, the Fathers had more scientia because they were viri sanctimonia vitae et veritatis studio insignes, and God rewarded them for that by amplioribus luminis sui praesidiis (E.B., No. 111). The allegorical method employed by the Fathers was useful, as it still is today, not in demonstrating dogmata fidei, but in promoting "virtue and piety" (E.B., No. 112).

In variation of Cyprian's theme that extra Ecclesiam nulla salus, Leo XIII now says concerning Biblical interpretation that extra Ecclesiam there can be no incorruptus Sacrarum Litterarum sensus. All non-Catholic interpreters are only "gnawing the bark" of Scripture. The medulla (marror or pith) of Scripture is available only to Roman Catholics (E.B., No. 113).

For Leo XIII, Biblical interpretation is the anima of all theology (E.B., No. 114), because (1) the obiectum fidei is said to be rooted in Scripture; (2) from the Bible, sicut pariter ex divina traditione (!), the heretical faith and Scriptural interpretation are to be refuted, and out of the Bible "the reasonableness, the true meaning, and the mutual relation of the truths of Catholicism"[1] are to be established. Biblical interpretation and the teaching of the Tradition are the fontes revelationis (E.B., No. 114); without both, or either, theology is neither rite, nor can it be exercised pro dignitate. Methodologically and epistemologically, Biblical studies are best guided by the study of St. Thomas. This had been outlined by Leo XIII fourteen years earlier in his encyclical letter Aeterni Patris (see above, p. 85, n. 4) and was remphasized by Pius XI in 1923 in his encyclical Studiorum Ducem.

The purpose of Biblical hermeneutics, besides proving, expounding, illustrating Catholic doctrine, is also, as shown in the next great section of the encyclical (E.B., Nos. 116-32), to maintain quam validissime, through Biblical interpretation, the

---

[1]Rome and the study of Scripture, op. cit., p. 18 (E.B., No. 114).

"integral authority" of the Scriptures. On the one hand, the content of the Catholic faith cannot be evaluated apart from the teaching of the divinum et infallibile magisterium Ecclesiae; on the other hand, all that the magisterium of the Church represents rests upon the auctoritate etiam Sacrae Scripturae (E.B., No. 116; see also No. 141). This hermeneutical circle is essential for the Roman Catholic concept of Biblical hermeneutics and its ecumenical implications. To defend the auctoritas integra of Catholic doctrine through the interpretation of Scripture the following means are recommended: the study of Oriental languages (E.B., No. 118), ars critica (E.B., No. 119), natural sciences (E.B., Nos. 120-22), history and related disciplines (E.B., No. 123), and the study of textual variants (E.B., No. 124).

The Pope calls for the application of optimae interpretandi regulae as the first step, though for a Catholic interpreter by no means the only step, to uncover the sententia loci. If, however, the application of "the best hermeneutical rules" did not lift the veil of obscurity from a passage of Scripture, the Catholic interpreter is then not to assume, as some erroneously had done, that that particular, obscure passage is not inspired, and ergo irrelevant or false. Catholics are to believe that all parts of the Canon are inspired. And, since God cannot be auctor erroris of any kind, the Bible, which is written by divine inspiration, excludes all error (E.B., No. 124). This hermeneutical principle of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible is held to be the traditional view of Catholicism (E.B., Nos. 125-27).

Concluding, Leo XIII restates the validity of Biblical

hermeneutics by urging that "in this very bitter battle over the study of Scripture" (E.B., No. 129) all hermeneutical resources available to Catholics, theologians, and non-theologians alike, are to be used. However, it is equally important to note another emphasis in these concluding notes. "No one should be so arrogant to believe ut omnem recte intelligat Scripturam"(E.B., No. 131). The only way of approaching Scripture rightly is that of reverentia et pietas. The "arrogance of earthly science" (a science that includes theology and Biblical hermeneutics!) must be removed and a holy desire be kindled, if intelligentia is to become, or to be, salutariter (E.B., No. 134).

Some of the principles set forth in Providentissimus Deus were elaborated and applied by Leo XIII himself during the last years of his pontificate. He continued to issue statements directing the interest of Catholics in Biblical studies, such as (1) the general instructions on how the Bible is to be studied and used in academic theological education and in the religious orders;[1] (2) what Bible versions and commentaries should, or should not, be circulating;[2] (3) the granting of indulgence for daily Scripture reading;[3] (4) authorizing the decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Inquisition on the authenticity of the text of I. John 5:7;[4] (5) the institution of a commission for Biblical

---

[1]Acta Sanctae Sedis (hereafter referred to as A.S.S.) XXXI (1898-99), 6-14, 264-65; XXXII (1899-1900), 202.

[2]A.S.S., XXIX (1897-98), 44-46 (tit. 1, No. 2.3.5.).

[3]Ecclesiastical Review, XX (1896), 418.

[4]A.S.S., XXIX (1896-97), 637 (E.B., No. 135).

studies in Leo's Apostolic Letter Vigilantiae[1] of October 30, 1902, another decisive step in the development of Biblical hermeneutics in modern Catholicism.

Reflecting on the results of the measures he had taken to promote Biblical studies, Leo XIII sees two kinds of results. On the one hand, he is grateful for the fact that "bishops and a great number of men of science" have so far cooperated with the program set forth in the encyclical Providentissimus Deus, and that a great Biblical awakening is noticeable urbe et orbe (E.B., No. 137). But on the other hand, not everything is as well as it ought to be. In the face of the growing "variety of science," as well as of the "multiple form of errors," Leo calls for a "federation of energies," aided by Papal authority, to expedite the full realization of the hermeneutical principles as outlined by Leo XIII. To this end, the Pontifical Biblical Commission was instituted as an instrument of Papal authority. This commission was to play an important role in the development of the "ecumenical" implications of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics.[2] It was to be the task of the Biblical Commission that a sana et incorrupta praeceptio of Biblical studies would flow, and keep flowing, from the Apostolic See of Peter (E.B., No. 139), and thus to manifest the ecumenical implications of hermeneutics. In bringing to bear upon Catholic Scriptural interpretation everything modern science has to offer (E.B., No. 140), the Commission is especially charged with watching that exegesis does not come under the "private judg-

---

[1] A.S.S., XXXV (1902-1903), 234-38 (E.B., Nos. 137-48).

[2] L. Pirot, "Commission Biblique," D.B.S., II (1934), 103-13.

ment of the learned," but remains in the hands of the Church. Biblical hermeneutics is invaluable; however, the obscurity of Scripture passages is not overcome by hermeneuticae leges, but only by following the directions issued by dux et magistra Ecclesia (E.B., No. 141). The cultivation of the Ars Critica is commendable for all attempts of grasping the full meaning of Scripture, but criticism without the control of the Church of Rome leads to intemperantia of judgment which the Commission must avoid (E.B., Nos. 141-42). Hermeneutical principles can, and must, be accepted as sound (sana), if they corroborate the interpretationem solam authentically set forth by the Church (E.B., No. 143). The Commission is to represent the dogmatical theory that extra Ecclesiam there is not, and there cannot be, any legitimate interpretation whatsoever (E.B., No. 141). Yet, Leo XIII launches his Biblical Commission with a fair warning: if it wants to succeed in winning the approval of all interpreters of Scripture, it must avoid two dangers, (1) of going beyond the limits of mutual charity while engaged in contentio disputandi; (2) of attempting to discuss "revealed truths and divine traditions" (E.B., No. 143). Leo warns that from such an undertaking as that of world-wide Catholic Bible studies, with the variety of individual scholars, of theological and ecclesiastical traditions pledged to cooperate, there cannot be expected any progress unless by salva consensione animorum and collectis in tuto principiis (ibid.).

Three aspects can be distinguished concerning the advancement of Biblical studies, their role and function in modern Catholicism, during the pontificate of Leo XIII. One aspect is

the strong and conscious emphasis on the traditional teaching of the Church of Rome with its Patristic and Medieval theological and liturgical heritage. Another aspect is the vigorous attempt of recognizing the validity of modern sciences for Biblical studies. Both modern sciences and Biblical exegesis were claimed by the Pope as welcome tools to prove the authenticity and authority of Catholic doctrine. The third aspect is the growing emphasis on the necessity of integrating the "conservative," traditional view of Biblical hermeneutics with the "progressive," modern scientific views. The subsequent history of Biblical hermeneutics in twentieth century Catholicism, as reflected in the documents of the Roman pontifs and of the leading theologians, is a continuous battle of keeping the balance between the first two aspects. At times, however, one of the two became overemphasized with the resulting bitter controversies.

Leo XIII himself, at the end of his reign, came in danger of stressing too much the conservative, institutional element, as the progressive side of his own Biblical program appeared to develop too independently. Together with the institution of the Pontifical Biblical Commission Leo had planned to transfer the Revue Biblique from Jerusalem to Rome, turning it into an official organ of the Biblical Commission.[1] Furthermore, plans were conceived to convert the Dominican École Biblique in Jerusalem into the Pontifical Biblical Institute to be established in Rome with Lagrange as the director. But this issue turned out differ-

---

[1]M. J. Lagrange, in Revue Biblique, XVI (1919), 599. See W. Drum, in Ecclesiastical Review, LXII (1920), 697.

ently from the way some had hoped, some had feared. Leo's successor followed a different policy.

Pius X (1903-1914), of course, carried out faithfully some of the points in the program initiated by Leo XIII. One of the major points was that of reestablishing the relevance of Biblical studies for theological education. Pius X ordered in the Apostolic Letter Scripturae Sanctae of 1904 that all academic degrees in Biblical studies will be conferred by the Biblical Commission (E.B., Nos. 149-57), and that Biblical studies in seminaries should get the attention Leo XIII had called for. To this latter point, Pius X turned his full attention in the Apostolic Letter Quoniam in re biblica of 1906 (E.B., Nos. 162-80). This letter reiterates Leo's call for a hermeneutical orientation of Biblical studies and teaching. The study of the leges hermeneuticae (E.B., No. 163) is a "means of learning of those things of which a priest should not be allowed to be ignorant" (E.B., No. 165). The right approach to Scripture must aim at, and document itself by, making the student a better preacher and a more devout Christian, i.e., a more devout Catholic (E.B., No. 171). Another constructive measure that was taken by Pius X was to commission the Benedictine Order with the revision of the Vulgate as another aspect of the program initiated by Leo XIII.[1]

Also in keeping with the progressive outlook of Leo's program was the final establishment of the Pontifical Biblical Institute by the Apostolic Letter Vinea electa of May, 1909.[2] En-

---

[1] A.S.S., XL (1907), 446-48, 721-22 (E.B., Nos. 185-86, 289-90).

[2] Acta Apostolicae Sedis, I (1909), 447-49 (E.B., Nos. 297-335).

trusted to the Jesuit Order which traditionally is the first, and the largest and most influential, religious order directly subject to Pontifical authority, the Biblical Institute, constitutionally part of the Gregorian University of Rome, was designed to exemplify or typify the kind of academic Biblical education the popes were hoping would be realized eventually in all Catholic seminaries. Two things are characteristic about the Biblical Institute: on the one hand, it is furnished with all desirable means and resources of modern science, education, and research to carry out Biblical studies according to all the requirements of hermeneutical theory; on the other hand, by virtue of the Jesuits being in charge of the work at the Institute, and of the existing connections between the Institute and the Biblical Commission, the Pontifical Biblical Institute is guaranteed to operate, in all its applications of all the modern sciences, within the bounds of the conservative Roman Catholic tradition. The Institute offers courses leading to Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctor's degrees in Biblical studies.[1] An integral part of the requirements for each degree is, of course, the study of the various aspects of Biblical hermeneutics.[2]

Compared with these constructive steps that Pius X took to promote Biblical studies in Catholicism, there were also some polemical measures, that are equally characteristic, if, indeed, not more so than the constructive ones, which Pius X deemed necessary to take in order that the right use and understanding of Scripture

---

[1] E.B., Nos. 355-87.

[2] See list of requirements for each degree in E.B., Nos. 634-48.

might remain an exclusively and legitimately Catholic prerogative. Attention must now be focused on the way in which Pius X coped with the problem of Modernism. What "The Biblical Question" was for Leo XIII, Modernism was for Pius X. It was during his pontificate that this whole issue came to a fatal climax which, for a while, seemed to bring the Catholic Church to a disruption similar in severity and extent to that of the sixteenth century.

The rise of the "Biblical Question" and/or Modernism, and the precise nature of each, are subject to many interpretations. Various kinds of analyses--historical, philosophical, theological, and others--have been suggested to bring the problem of Modernism into focus.[1] Pius X took three steps of combatting these "pernicious, gravest errors" that were threatening once again the mysteries of (Catholic) faith and Biblical interpretation (E.B., No. 190). He first issued the Decree Lamentabili[2] in July, 1907, which was, in fact, a new "syllabus of errors" resembling in form and rigor the one of Pius IX. Two months later, on September 8, 1907, he issued a whole encyclical, entitled Pascendi[3] in which the historical phenomenon of Modernism, as well as its perennial theological problem, were analyzed. The third

---

[1]Besides the articles on "Question Biblique" and"Modernism" in the standard Catholic encyclopedias and dictionaries, there are three important works on this issue: Albert Houtin, La Question Biblique au XIXe siècle (Paris: Picard, 1902); idem, La Question Biblique au XXe siècle (Paris, 1906); Friedrich Heiler, Alfred Loisy, Der Vater des katholischen Modernismus (Munich: Erasmus, 1947); A.R. Vidler, The Modernist movement in the Roman Church (Cambridge, 1934); E. Buonaiuti, Le modernisme catholique, tr. by R. Monnot (1927). Cf. Programm der italienischen Modernisten (Jena: Diederichs, 1908).

[2]A.S.S., XL (1907), 470-78 (E.B., Nos. 190-256).

[3]A.S.S., XL (1907), 593-650 (excerpts E.B., Nos. 257-82).

step followed in 1910 with the requirement of the anti-Modernist oath by all teachers of Scripture. One extreme was thus creating another extreme. It took Catholic theology many years to lose, at least on the surface, that paralyzing anti-Modernist complex in its hermeneutical orientation.

The Modernist controversy was the new front line of an old battle within the Church. The rise of heresies in the early Church, the rise of Protestantism and Rationalism was possible, like the rise of Modernism, because of an undue separation of theology and philosophy. The Modernist controversy was ultimately over the hermeneutical issue. Pius X charged the Modernists (Tyrrell, Buonaiuti, Loisy, Houtin, and other leading representatives) with advocating entirely new, un-Catholic conceptions of religion and revelation. They were charged with separating exegesim theologicam et pastoralem a scientifica et historica (E.B., No. 267). A hermeneutical theory, however solidly philosophical and theological, which advocates clearly distinguishable approaches to Christum historicum et Christum fidei, has proved itself to be in the wrong (E.B., No. 275). Philosophical agnosticism and theological, Protestant fideism lead to one and the same kind of distortion of the orthodox Catholic relation between history and faith, or reason and faith. In condemning all other than Thomist versions of attempting to solve these hermeneutical issues of the relationship of faith and reason or history respectively, Pius X kept the development of Biblical hermeneutics strictly within traditional bounds.

To what extremes this reactionary attitude was to lead is best shown by three incidents dating from the latter half of the

pontificate of Pius X. In his Motu Proprio Praestantia Scripturae Sacrae[1] of November 18, 1907, all the pronouncements of the Biblical Commission were declared to be "binding in conscience" (universos omnes conscientiae obstringi--E.B., No. 286). Another incident is the suspension of the publication of the famous Revue Biblique on June 29, 1912,[2] by order of the Consistorial Congregation, which objected to the praise of Protestant exegesis (identified with rationalism!) and to the bitter irony toward Catholic exegetes evident in the publications of the Revue. The third incident occurred right after the death of Pius X (August, 1914), when his successor, Benedict XV (1914-22), felt it necessary to warn against the terrorism that was exercised by certain anti-Modernist reactionary elements who sought to suppress every kind of progressive program.[3] Members of the Sodalitium Pianum, an international organization of anti-Modernists, had gone so far as to criticize openly Leo XIII for the liberalism (!) in his official pronouncements concerning Biblical studies.[4]

During the pontificate of Benedict XV all the constitutive elements of Biblical hermeneutics in modern Roman Catholicism were called to the attention of the Catholic world. (1) The activities

---

[1]A.S.S., XL (1907), 723-26 (E.B., Nos. 283-88).

[2]Acta Apostolicae Sedis, IV (1912); cf. article "The Consistorial Congregation and the Bible," American Ecclesiastical Review (February, 1913), pp. 229 ff.

[3]Benedict XV, "Ad Beatissimi Condemnens," Acta Apostolicae Sedis (hereafter referred to as A.A.S.) VI (1914), 576-77.

[4]See especially E. Barbier (ex-Jesuit!), Progrès du libéralisme Catholique en France sous le Pape Leon XIII (Paris, 1908).

of the Biblical Commission and of the Biblical Institute are commended and extended,[1] reaffirming the hermeneutical program of Leo XIII and Pius X, particularly concerning the revision of the Vulgate.

2) The promulgation of the Codex Juris Canonici on May 27, 1917, established[2] the interpretation of Scripture in theological education as an independent, distinct discipline besides the other, more traditional disciplines of theology. It also established the censorship of the Church over all publications of books translating, interpreting, or commenting on, Holy Scripture.[3]

3) There was a continuation in the emphasis on the use and understanding of Scripture by the laity in daily Bible reading;[4] to this end numerous Catholic Bible societies began to work. One of the oldest is the Society of St. Jerome, organized in 1902. Hand in hand with this emphasis on Bible reading by the laity is to be found a growing awareness of the significance of the use of Scripture in the liturgy of the Church.[5] The Biblical Renaissance

---

[1]Benedict XV, "Cum Biblia Sacra," A.A.S., VIII (1916), 305-308; also E.B., Nos. 422-36.

[2]In Book III, Part VI, Tit. XXI, Canon 1365, 1366 (E.B., Nos. 437-38).

[3]Ibid., Tit. XXIII, Canon 1385, 1391, 1399, 1400 (E.B., Nos. 439-42).

[4]A.A.S., VI (1914), 306-307--a decree of the Congregation of the Holy Office granting indulgence for daily Gospel reading. Ibid., pp. 539-40--letter of Benedict XV commending the work of the Society of Jerome.

[5]See, e.g., Motu Proprio, "Adhinc Duos Annos," A.A.S., V (1913), 449-51. Before then Pius X, "Divino Afflatu," A.A.S., III (1911), 633-38. See 1945 Pius XII, "In Cotidianis Precibus," E.B., Nos. 571-75; cf. also Pius XII encyclical Mediator Dei. See E. B. Koenker, The liturgical renaissance in the Roman Catholic Church (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), pp. 89-93.

strongly affected and promoted the "Liturgical Renaissance," very similar to what happened in contemporary Continental European Protestantism.

4) Like the previous centenary celebration in memory of Roger Bacon, held in England in June 1913,[1] and subsequent encyclicals issued in memory of Dante and his knowledge of Scripture (April, 1921), in memory of Francis of Sales (1922), and Augustine (1930), Benedict's encyclical letter Spiritus Paraclitus[2] of September 15, 1920, issued on the fifteenth centenary of the death of Jerome, can be taken as a focal point in the development of Biblical hermeneutics in modern Roman Catholicism. In these encyclicals, particularly in Spiritus Paraclitus, we have the documents of the continuing theological work of the modern popes trying to integrate the full load of the doctrinal and liturgical tradition of the Church with modern exegetical and historical sciences. To determine the nature and function of Biblical interpretation in and for the Church and Theology was (and remained so) the hermeneutical issue par excellence.[3] While in the first decade of the twentieth century the debate centered on whether or not the renaissance of Biblical studies was due to the revival of the "Scholastic Method,"[4] the 1920's are the times when the debate

---

[1]See W. Drum (S.J.) in American Ecclesiastical Review, LI (1914), 498.

[2]A.A.S., XII (1920), 385-422 (cf. E.B., Nos. 444-95).

[3]Cf. H. Pope, "Why Divorce Our Teaching of Theology from Our Teaching of the Bible?" Irish Theological Quarterly (1913). T. Worden, "Is Scripture To Remain the Cinderella of Catholic Theology?" Scripture, VIII (1956), 2-12.

[4]G. Hoberg, Die Fortschritte der Biblischen Wissenschaften (Freiburg: Herder, 1902); cf. review in American Ecclesiastical

begins to focus on the relationship between Biblical and Patristic studies.

Benedict emphasized, of course, the necessity of continuing, and of more fully realizing yet, the hermeneutical teachings of his predecessors (E.B., No. 444). But the encyclical, as Vaccari observes,[1] was not so much an attempt of evoking again the recently established hermeneutical theories, or another call for more intensified Biblical studies, but rather an act of real progress in the development of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics. St. Jerome is celebrated in the encyclical as the prototype of all Catholic interpreters. It is said of him that he went to the Orient for one significant purpose--he desired to improve his scientia of the Savior, and to partake more fully of the "riches" (divitiae) of Christ through Bible study (E.B., No. 445). Jerome's spiritual, devotional life, his scientific hermeneutical work, his obedience to the bishop of Rome documented by refuting from Scripture the oppugnatores unitatis ac doctrinae Catholicae (E.B., No. 447)--all these aspects qualify Jerome as the patron saint of Biblical interpreters (E.B., Nos. 445-47). Furthermore, he deserves to be exalted before all others, because he advocated three important hermeneutical issues which some modern Catholic interpreters are in danger of not respecting enough (E.B., Nos. 454-62).

Review, XXVI (1902), pp. 557 f. Ibid., XXVII (1903), 140-49: "Scholasticism and the Modern Method," by V. McNabb. See also M. Blondel, "Histoire et Dogme; les lacunes philosophiques de l'exégèse moderne," La Quinzaine (1904), pp. 145-67.

[1]A. Vaccari, "L'enciclica Spiritus Paraclitus per il centenario di S. Girolamo," Gregorianum, II (1921), 161-73, especially p. 173.

(1) Jerome advocated the hermeneutical theory of the "plenary" inspiration of Scripture. It is by the Holy Spirit, spirante, suggerente, insinuante, dictante, that the Holy Scriptures are compositos, conscriptos, editos (E.B., No. 448).
(2) Jerome commended the auctoritas of Scripture. Because Scripture had authoritative character for him, he used it as an "armory" of weapons for refuting heretics by Scripture (E.B., No. 449).
(3) Jerome realized that the doctrine of the inspiration and authority of Scripture required the supplement of the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture (E.B., Nos. 450-52). Inerrancy, he concluded, is one of the "effects" of inspiration.

Jerome's "sound" old concepts of Biblical hermeneutics are then (E.B., Nos. 453-63) contrasted with certain modern hermeneutical endeavors made to discover "new ways" of interpretation, however, by neglecting the hermeneutical precepts of Leo XIII and Pius X, and overstepping the limits (fines terminosque) set by the Fathers. Benedict complains of persisting "Modernist" tendencies of discriminating in the Bible (a) between religious and profane elements (E.B., Nos. 454-55); (b) between absolute truth of the facts and relative truth of the meaning of those facts (E.B., Nos. 456-58); (c) between history and faith (E.B., Nos. 459-60); and, finally, (d) attention is called to the misuse of hermeneutical principles--principles which, if kept within certain fines, are sound (rectae)--as in such problem areas as "implicit quotations," genera litterarum, and the problem of pseudo-history or myth in Scripture (E.B., Nos. 461-62).

The Catholic clergy and laity are to flee insanam opinandi libertatem in matters of Biblical exegesis. What the Catholic

Church teaches its children as the normative principles of Biblical exegesis has been learned, it is claimed, in no other school than that of the Divine Master Jesus Christ himself (E.B., No. 463). Doctrina Hieronymi (concerning Biblical interpretation) doctrina Christi est (ibid.). Whatever "ecumenical" and purportedly christological implications there are in the concept of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics, they are understood strictly and exclusively in terms of the dogmatical tradition of the Apostolic See at Rome with its universal claims.

The rest of Benedict's encyclical speaks of the various benefits to be expected from the right use and understanding of the Bible. There are, first of all, some "practical counsels" (E.B., Nos. 464-79) directed at students of Scripture. They are admonished to exhibit, like Jerome, a most ardent amor Bibliorum (ibid., No. 464) based on unceasing reading (lectio continua) and the most accurate study of Scripture (accuratissima pervestigatio--ibid., No. 465). Such amor and scientia of Scripture requires a certain predisposition, such as "diligent preparation and a good will toward Biblical studies," which, again like Jerome, may require of the student severum vitae institutum. Jerome's life is a document of how humilis piusque animi habitus ad Bibliorum intelligentiam conferat (ibid., Nos. 468, 475-77). Not to be forgotten, of course, is the requirement of "submissive homage" to the Roman pontiffs (ibid., Nos. 470-74).

Secondly, Benedict foresees benefits from Biblical studies for the training of priests at seminaries, particularly at the Pontifical Biblical Institute (ibid., Nos. 480-81). Even the learned clerics can be guilty of sinning through ignorance of

Scripture (clericos litteratos Scripturarum ignorantia peccare--E.B., No. 480).

Thirdly, a Catholic approach to Biblical hermeneutics ought to take into account the threefold practical purpose of Biblical interpretation (E.B., Nos. 482-87)--for one, it is to be learned from Scripture how one is to lead a spiritual life ad perfectionem. Benedict points out (ibid., No. 482) how ministers (administri sacrorum), by never looking at their Bibles (prohabita Bibliorum lectione) not only starve themselves to spiritual death, but allow many others to perish also (fame ipsi pereunt et alios nimis multos interire sinunt). On the other hand, knowledge of Scripture enables a man to defend the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church. It is in this connection that Benedict repeats the famous statement of Leo XIII[1] that the usus Scripturae is the anima of theology (E.B., No. 483). And a third usus Scripturae is that for the preaching ministry (ibid., No. 484; also Nos. 486-87).[2]

Finally, the study of Scripture is said to bring forth "sweet fruit"; clergy and laity alike, by cultivating the virtue of cognoscendam percipiendamque Sacri Codicis (E.B., No. 488), will harvest the solatio pacis et interioris gaudii (ibid.). Through the interpretation of Scripture they will also come to understand and use the maxima Ecclesiae privilegia (ibid., No. 489) and how to make Christian, Biblical ethics relevant to individuals and society (ibid., No. 490). Jerome's maxim that

---

[1]See above, p. 94.

[2]On the use of Scripture in preaching see Benedict XV, encyclical "Humani Generis" of June 15, 1917, in A.A.S., IX (1917), 305-17.

"ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" is quoted by Benedict but with the warning that the cognitio and amor Christi must not be separated from the zeal for the Catholic Church, for the Eucharist, for the veneration of the Virgin, etc. (E.B., Nos. 491-93).

Jerome once wished that Rome would possess what Bethlehem has (E.B., No. 493). His wish has been fulfilled, though in a different sense. His relics now rest in Rome beside the relics of the manger of the Lord (ibid., No. 494). And from Rome now Jerome still speaks to the whole world through his writings, among other things of the Scripturarum praestantia. In following Jerome's principles of Biblical hermeneutics all Christians may take hope of becoming united again on the basis of Scripture (ibid.). However, as the encyclical concludes, there are not only the Jeromian principles of hermeneutics set forth in Spiritus Paraclitus, but also the principles set forth in Providentissimus Deus,[1] which are to be followed if interpreters of Scripture, saturated with the sweetness of Scripture (Sacrarum Litterarum dulcedine perfusi et roborati), are to arrive at (assequi) the all-surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ (supereminentem Iesu Christi scientiam--E.B., No. 495).

Besides the theological advances in the Bible Encyclical Spiritus Paraclitus, the centenary celebration in honor of Jerome has still another effect on the development of modern Catholic Biblical hermeneutics. In July, 1921, at Cambridge, England, the "Catholic Bible Congress," supported by the Catholic laity, theological Biblical scholarship and the hierarchy, met for the first

---

[1]See above, pp. 87-96.

time,[1] with the express purpose of putting into practice the hermeneutical principles set forth in the official announcements of Leo XIII, Pius X, and Benedict XV. This task of guarding and developing the hermeneutical heritage was carried out on three different levels: (1) the policies of the Curia and the Papal announcements; (2) the work of the Biblical Institute and of Biblical, theological scholarship in seminaries and religious orders; (3) the world-wide Bible movement among the Catholic laity.

The pontificate of Pius XI (1922-39) is characterized by two points of emphasis concerning the promotion of Biblical hermeneutics. (1) To secure the right teaching of Scripture over against the wrong, i.e., the "non-Catholic and Rationalistic" (E.B., No. 505), Pius XI decreed in a Motu Proprio of April, 1924,[2] that the teachers of Scripture must have their academic and ecclesiastical qualification for teaching approved by either the Biblical Commission or the Biblical Institute (E.B., No. 509), and that the academic degrees conferred by the Commission or the Institute entitle the holder to the same rights (iura) and effects (canonicos effectus) as those who hold degrees in dogmatical theology or Canonical Law (E.B., No. 507). (2) To promote the text-critical work begun by Pius X in 1907,[3] the monastery of St. Jerome was founded by Pius XI on June 15, 1933,[4] and endowed with

---

[1] C. Lattey (ed.), The Religion of the Scriptures, Papers from the Catholic Bible Congress (Cambridge, 1921).

[2] "Bibliorum Scientiarum," A.A.S., XVI (1924), 180-82; E.B., Nos. 505-512. Cf. E. J. Byrne, "The Curriculum of Scriptural Studies in our Seminaries," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, I (1939), 214-22, 333-41.

[3] See above, p. 100. n. 1.

[4] Pius XI, Apostolic Constitution "Inter Praecipuas," A.A.S., XXVI (1934), 85-87.

all the means of research to carry out this important project. On the implied theological problem of the relationship of the original Greek and Hebrew texts to the Latin, Pius XII felt compelled to comment[1] ten years later, when some controversy had arisen over the effect of text-criticism on the authenticity of the Vulgate.[2]

The energy with which Catholic Biblical scholarship went to work during the 1920's and 1930's is manifest in the three major publications of the Pontifical Biblical Institute: "Biblica" since 1920, on technical exegetical matters; "Verbum Domini" since 1921, intended to apply Biblical interpretation to preaching, the liturgy, and the spiritual life of the clergy; and "Orientalia Christiana Analecta" since 1923, dedicated to the study of the Biblical heritage of the Eastern Church Fathers. The renaissance of Biblical studies progressed also in proportion to the spreading and deepening interest in the heritage of the Church Fathers[3] and their contribution to the transmission of the Biblical text, the formation of the Canon, and the interpretation of Scripture in the dogma, liturgy, and the spiritual, ethical disciplines of the Church. (See below, Chapter VI.)

In the United States the awakening to a new approach in

---

[1]See below, pp. 124-26.

[2]B. Ahern, "Textual Directives of the Encyclical Divino Afflante Spiritu," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, VII (1945), 340-47.

[3]A Vaccari, "Lo studio della Bibbia all'età dei Padri e ai nostri giorni," La Civiltà Cattolica, XCII, 4 (1941), 321-34; XCIII, 1 (1942), 340-53; XCIII, 3 (1942), 331-40; XCIII, 4 (1942), 98-103.

Scriptural studies may be dated by the beginning of the publication of two series by the Catholic University of America, School of Sacred Science (founded 1916)--one on New Testament Studies (since 1920), the other on Patristic Studies (since 1922). In Spain the new Biblical movement in theology found its representation in the periodical Estudios Biblicos (since 1926). In Belgium the theological faculty at Louvain made its contribution in the outstanding series "Analecta Lovaniesia Biblica et Orientalia" (since 1934). In France the new work is best represented by the supplement to Vigouroux's Dictionnaire de la Bible beginning in 1928.[1] In Italy three events took place that call for attention: the Biblical Institute extended its influence in 1927 by establishing a branch institute in Jerusalem, so to speak next door to the Dominican École Biblique; in 1928 the Biblical Institute was incorporated by Papal decree[2] with the Pontifical Institute for Oriental Studies[3] and with the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome, something that was more than a mere administrative move; and in 1927 the Biblical Commission published in one volume all the relevant official statements of the Catholic Church concerning Scripture and its interpretation, together with the decisions of the Biblical Commission.[4]

In view of the large number of hermeneutical textbooks

---

[1]See above, p. 86, n. 3.

[2]Motu Proprio "Quod Maxime," A.A.S., Vol. XX (1928).

[3]Cf. Pius XI Encyclical "Rerum Orientalium Studiis," A.A.S., Vol. XX (1928).

[4]Enchiridion Biblicum. Documenta ecclesiastica Sacrarum Scripturarum spectantia (1st ed.; Rome, 1927).

that continued to be used as reprints of outmoded "classics," complaints were voiced[1] as to the "obsolete questions" that were considered in these guides. A form not altogether new became current in the early 1920's, to outline the three distinctive areas of consideration about Biblical hermeneutics[2]--noematics, heuristics, and proforistics.[3] In this form the growing complexity and variety of Catholic Biblical hermeneutical theory, past and present, could best be presented.

The new scientific theological study of Scripture in Catholicism led, of course, also to a new rapport between Catholic and Protestant theology, a rapport of either a polemical, or apologetical, or irenical nature. A German scientific quarterly, Catholica,[4] came out in 1932 with the expressed purpose of bringing the new Catholic Biblical exegesis, together with the full weight of the doctrinal and liturgical tradition of Catholicism, to bear upon the ceaseless attempt to "repatriate" the Protestants. Parallel to Catholicism, European and American Protestantism was beginning to evaluate on its part the rediscovery of the historical revelation of God as witnessed in Scripture and Tradition--an evaluation which, analogous to the Catholic development, also resulted in a polemically, as well as irenically ori-

---

[1]I. B. Girardi, Elementa Hermeneutica Biblicae (Patavia, 1923), preface.

[2]F. X. Kortleitner, Hermeneutica Biblica (New York: Pustet, 1923).

[3]For a definition of each, see below, Chapter VII.

[4]Catholica, Vierteljahreszeitschrift für Kontroversstheologie (Munster, 1932--).

entated "Neo-Orthodoxy"[1] that began to flourish after the defeat of "modernism," "historism," and "liberalism" in Protestant theology.

The 1930's were a time when, under the influence and impact of the historical critical studies, Catholic theology--like contemporary Protestant theologies--"under a general spell of self-examination, began to reflect on itself in order to see just what it was and with what it was working."[2] There were theologians that still[3] felt like blaming Leo XIII for encouraging the critical study of Scripture; who lamented the fact that "the rise of destructive Biblical criticism has distorted our perspective"; and who felt that Catholic Biblical interpretation, as well as the study of theology on the whole, had been too "defensive everywhere."[4] Nine years earlier the Jesuit McClellan had voiced a warning in the same Review[5] that the recourse to any other guidance than that of Mother Church (viz., the guidance provided by critical studies alone) never yet "yielded stable results." And stability was a major concern of that time.

Patristic research provided some corrective means for

---

[1]The works of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner serve as examples.

[2]G. Weigel, "The Historical Background of the Encyclical 'Humani Generis,'" Theological Studies, XII (1951), 208-230 (p. 215).

[3]See above, p. 104, n. 4.

[4]H. Pope (O.P.), "The Teaching of the Bible for the Ministry," American Ecclesiastical Review, LXXXVIII (1933), 16-27 (p. 23).

[5]W. H. McClellan, American Ecclesiastical Review, LXXI (1924), 531.

counter-balancing the criticism of Biblical studies.[1] The revival of Thomism[2] and the progress of the Liturgical Movement were two further "means of grace" to the uneasy Catholic conscience concerning Biblical criticism. However, the reactionary sentiment against the scientific study of Scripture brewing for some time finally did become outspoken in the controversies that mark the early 1940's when a new encyclical on Biblical interpretation became necessary[3] soon after the present pope, Pius XII, took office in 1939. Besides outlining the controversy that came to a climax in 1941, tribute must also be paid to one other important development that was duly praised by Pius XII (E.B., No. 545): it is all the "mediating, investigating, writing, teaching, preaching, translating, and propagating of the Bible" that was carried on by de re biblica consociationibus (Biblical associations),[4] congressibus, coetibus per hebdomadam habitis (organized study weeks for Bible studies), bibliothecis, sodalitatibus meditandis evangeliis (ibid.).

Pius XII also praised the resolutions concerning the Biblical

---

[1]See, e.g., A. L. J. Coan, The rule of faith in the ecclesiastical writings of the first two centuries (Washington, 1924); and Van den Eynde, Les Normes de l'Enseignement Chrétien dans la Littérature Patristique des Trois Premiers Siècles (Paris, 1933).

[2]See above, p. 85, n. 4; see article by G. Weigel (above, p. 116, n. 2).

[3]Pius XII encyclical "Divino Afflante Spiritu," A.A.S., XXXV (1943), 297-326 (E.B., Nos. 538-69).

[4]In Italy since 1902 (see above, p. 105, point 3), Austria since 1926, Germany since 1934, Switzerland since 1935, U.S.A. since 1937, England since 1940, Spain since 1942.

education of theological students and the laity, and he spoke highly of the text-critical work.[1]

Equally significant are the sharp reactions from some minority groups of theologians, clergy, and laity against the official policies of the Roman pontiffs concerning Biblical interpretation and against the Biblical education offered by the Pontifical Biblical Institute. In the summer of 1941 an anonymous paper of forty-eight pages was sent to the cardinals, bishops, and superiors of convents and monasteries in Italy, charging that the sistema critico-scientifico nello studio e nell'interpretazione della Sacra Scriptura was un gravissimo pericolo for both "the Church and the soul" (E.B., No. 522). In France a similar protest had been smoldering for several years as the by-product of either the evaluation of Patristic exegesis or, as in the case of Claudel, of the appeal for a "pneumatic" exegesis of Scripture.[2]

The Modernists had erred by taking the scientific historical principles as the ultimate norm. But the influence of Modernism on Catholic Biblical hermeneutics had ceased long before the death of Loisy in 1940.[3] The emerging new and "grave error about the fundamental principles of Catholic hermeneutics"

---

[1]See, e.g., the text-critical work and program outlined in Proceedings of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, October, 1937 (St. Meinrad, Ind., 1938), pp. 16-132.

[2]See Paul Claudel's famous preface (pp. 17-118) in his edition of Introduction au Livre de Ruth by Abbé Tardif de Moidrey (Paris: Desclee, 1938).

[3]See lengthy article on Loisy by J. Bonsirven in D.B.S., fasc. XXVI (1953), 530-44; cf. F. Heiler, op. cit., pp. 206 ff.

that spoke in these reactionaries in Italy and France went to the other extreme of requiring for Biblical interpretation nothing but speciali lumi individuali from the Holy Spirit, just as (it is claimed) the primitive Protestants had done (E.B., No. 523). These reactionaries[1] pleaded for "spiritual meditation" (in terms of dogma, liturgy, and the like) as the traditional and truly Catholic hermeneutical approach over against the spiritually "barren" scientific approach.

The Pontifical Biblical Commission reacted immediately and uncompromisingly. In a letter to the archbishops and bishops of Italy,[2] four subject matters were especially emphasized for restating just what the official and traditional Catholic hermeneutical orientation is. (1) The literal sense of Scripture is held to be of capitale importanza, because it is in the literal sense that the concept of inspiration is most relevant. Merely, as the anonymous author of the pamphlet did, to acknowledge the literal sense pro forma is to misunderstand the basic hermeneutical theory of the inspiration of Scripture, a theory clearly defined by Leo XIII and Benedict XV (E.B., Nos. 524-25). (2) The original Greek and Hebrew texts, it is reaffirmed, are superior to the Vulgate version and are not, as the pamphlet suggested, subject to the Vulgate. The Vulgate version is authentic for Catholic exegesis, theology, and liturgy only in a legal sense (in senso giuridico) and useful as "vis probativa in rebus fidei et morum" according to a decree of the Council of Trent (E.B., Nos. 526-27).

---

[1]About the identification of one of the writers, see F. M. Braun, Les Études Bibliques (Fribourg, 1946), p. 29, n. 1.

[2]A.A.S., XXXIII (1941), 465-72 (E.B., Nos. 522-33).

(3) Textual criticism is held to be neither superfluous nor, as contended in the pamphlet, concerned merely with the human element in Scripture. Since Origen and Jerome "the necessity and utility of textual criticism" has duly been realized as an expression of the veneration for the Sacred Text (E.B., Nos. 528-29). (4) The study of the Oriental languages and of other auxiliary non-theological sciences (history, archeology, etc.) as heuristic tools for the comprehensive interpretation of the spiritual nature of Scripture is defended against the charge of the dogmatical reactionaries who hold that only spiritual and theological (dogmatical, liturgical) considerations should serve as Catholic hermeneutical principles (E.B., Nos. 530-31).

Recalling the major developments of Biblical hermeneutics since the encyclical of Leo XIII (E.B., Nos. 532-33), it is concluded in the Letter of the Biblical Commission that "today, no less than yesterday, it is important that the priests and ministers of the Word of God be well prepared, and capable of giving satisfactory reply not only to questions concerning the dogma e morale cattolica, but also to the problems raised over the verità storica e la dottrina religiosa della Bibbia (E.B., No. 533).

One of the issues dealt with in this letter of 1941 was taken up again two years later in a decree of the Biblical Commission concerning the use of Bible translations in the vernacular.[1] As to the question whether translations in the vernacular made from the original texts (textibus primigeniis) could be used and claim authority, the Commission replied by calling attention again

---

[1] A.A.S., XXXV (1943), 270 (E.B., Nos. 535-37).

to the recommendation of Leo XIII in Providentissimus Deus to use vernacular translations, however, under two conditions only: (1) that the translations were used sub vigili competentis auctoritatis ecclesiasticae cura, and (2) that they were prepared iuxta probatas scientiae sacrae adaeque profanae leges (E.B., No. 535).

With respect to the Commission's last decree on this issue[1] two new points are emphasized: (1) the modern vernacular translations from the original Biblical languages may be used rite by the faithful pro privata ipsorum pietate, provided such translations have been approved by theological scholarship and the hierarchy (E.B., No. 536); (2) a vernacular version, if used in public worship or theological debate, must conform to the Latin as the textum liturgicum. "If expedient," priests may use vernacular versions, provided they are translations of the Latin liturgical text and are used "with full permission" to illustrate or explain the meaning with the help of recurrence to the original text or to another "more clear" translation (E.B., No. 537).

With the boycott continuing on the part of some against admitting scientific hermeneutical principles as necessary means of interpreting Scripture,[2] and with the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Providentissimus Deus, another encyclical concerning the nature and function of Biblical

---

[1]"De Usu Versionum Sacrae Scripturae in Ecclesiis," A.A.S., XXXI (1934), 315 (E.B., No. 520).

[2]See, e.g., J. de Monléon (O.S.B.), Retour à l'Écriture Sainte et à sa conception traditionelle, Collection Temoignages III, Trésors de Sagesse (Paris, 1942).

hermeneutics in modern Catholicism had become due.[1] In the tradition of his predecessors, Pius said, the problem of Biblical interpretation has been one of his deepest concerns (cura) since he began his pontificate.[2] With his Biblical encyclical he intended to accomplish three things: (1) for the sake of "stabilizing and perfecting" Biblical studies in modern Catholicism Pius wants to reaffirm (confirmemus et inculcemus) the hermeneutical theories set forth by Leo XIII as the princeps studiorum biblicorum lex; (2) to restate some basic Catholic hermeneutical principles as guides for Biblical studies at the present time; (3) to make all "sons of the Church," given to Biblical studies, more dedicated yet to this "necessary and laudable matter" (E.B., No. 538).

In view of the controversies of the early 1940's and the unsatisfactory way in which some theological schools in some of the countries had responded to the call of reorganizing their educational program in terms of greater emphasis on Biblical education, Pius XII evaluates Catholic Biblical hermeneutics in its historical perspective (E.B., Nos. 539-45) as well as in its basic dogmatical orientation (E.B., Nos. 546-68).

In historical perspective Catholic Biblical hermeneutics appears to Pius XII to have been outlined so well by Leo XIII that the safest thing to do is "to adhere to (Leo's hermeneutics) religiously" (ibid.,p.540). For Pius XII, Leo's main contribution to Catholic Biblical hermeneutics had been the decree of the infallibility or inerrancy of the Bible on the very basis of his-

---

[1]Pius XII encyclical Divino Afflante Spiritu, A.A.S., XXXV (1943), 297-326 (E.B., Nos. 538-69).

[2]Pius XII, Sermo ad alumnos Seminariorum . . . in Urbe, A.A.S., XXXI (1939), 245-51.

torical criticism (ibid., p. 539). For the defense of (1) the historical truth of Scripture and (2) the authenticity of the text transmitted to us, Catholic Biblical hermeneutics depends on the concept of inspiration which maintains that God, as author of Scripture, is free from error, and that Man, as recipient of revelation in the act of inspiration, cannot but reflect the revelation with time-conditioned elements entering into the process of both comprehending as well as expressing and communicating the revelation.[1] This concept of inspiration as the corner-stone of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics, Pius claims, has ecumenical significance for the Lord's flock (ad utilitatem dominici gregis--E.B., No. 540).

In briefly analyzing the progress of Biblical studies in modern Catholicism, Pius points to three areas where hermeneutical principles had proved applicable and relevant: (1) the progress in Biblical science itself, manifest in the work of the École Biblique in Jerusalem and the Biblical Commission in Rome (E.B., No. 541); (2) the reorganization of theological education through the emphasis on Biblical studies, best demonstrated by the Pontifical Biblical Institute (E.B., No. 542); (3) new religious persuasiveness and depth of devotion in public worship and preaching, and in the individual private devotion of clergy and laity, as the result of the propagation of the use and understanding of the Bible. Special praise is given to the Society of Jerome (E.B., No. 544). The modern Roman pontiffs had given new insights to traditional Catholic Biblical hermeneutics; but it is

---

[1]Further details see below, p. 130 ; see also Chapter VII.

due to the cooperation of the hierarchy, scholars, the religious orders, clergy, and laity that progress in Biblical studies can be claimed. Progress, however, will continue only if the hermeneutical principles set forth by Leo XIII and his successors are "more firmly, eagerly, and faithfully accepted by all" (firmius, alacrius, fidentiusque retineant omnes), in spite of, or because of, persisting controversies and difficulties (E.B., No. 545).

In view of the present situation (of 1943) and future aspirations for broadening and deepening Biblical studies on the basis of the new discoveries (mainly in archeology and of Biblical manuscripts--E.B., No. 546), Pius XII considers the following five points concerning Biblical hermeneutics as most relevant for mid-twentieth century Catholicism:

1. A major issue is that of justifying hermeneutically why and how the recourse to the original texts and the task of textual criticism are necessary without abandoning the authority of the Vulgate version (E.B., Nos. 547-49). The revival of the study of the Biblical languages is for Pius XII the contemporary renaissance of Humanism (inde a renatis humanioribus litteris ad novam vitam revocata--E.B., No. 547).[1] Greatest care for even the smallest textual details is necessary in order to understand penitius pleniusque mentem of the hagiographer. A Catholic exegete must support his interpretation by all the tools philology

---

[1]On modern Catholic evaluations of the contribution of Medieval Renaissance and Humanism for the history and concept of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics, see below, Chapter VI, p. 152, n. 2; p. 162, n. 5; p. 164, n. 2.

provides. The original text (primigenium textum) has maiorem auctoritatem maiusque pondus than the best translation (conversio) ancient or modern (E.B., No. 547). The cognitio linguarum should be "conjoined" with a "solid knowledge of, or skill in, textual criticism" (solida criticae artis peritia--ibid.). The criticae artis studia has been held in honor by the Catholic Church ever since the first centuries, Pius claims. Textual criticism must be developed not only because of the progress made in the critical editions of secular books, but also because of the quest for editing divinum eloquium purius accuratiusque. Pius XII decrees textual criticism to be not only necessary ad recte perspicienda of the God-given writings, but also "vehemently postulated" ex pietate illa expressing gratefulness to God for sending the Biblical writings, the "paternal letters to his children" (E.B., No. 548).

In the light of this decree, Pius XII then determines the precise nature of the Tridentine Decree of 1546 De editione et usu Sacrorum Librorum (E.B., Nos. 61-64). The praecellens auctoritas seu authentia that was attributed to the Vulgate version, long before and after the Council of Trent had made its decree, was due not because of criticas rationes, but because of its legitimum in Ecclesiis usum. The authentia of the Vulgate for all questions pertaining to Biblical hermeneutics is not critica but iuridica. This implies that the Catholic exegete must not use the Vulgate text for critical literary historical analysis. Even when it comes to the interpretation of the theological content of a Scripture passage, Catholic theologians must use the original text as the basis of their exegesis and

theology. The Church's use of the Vulgate text throughout the centuries has demonstrated that the Vulgate can be relied on not to contain errors against faith and morals. The modern exegete can ultimately do no other than to "confirm" the recta significatio of Scripture and with it the authority of the Vulgate in rebus doctrinae. The means of confirming both, the correct meaning of Scripture and the authority of the Vulgate in matters of Catholic doctrine, are the original texts (ex primigeniis textibus) and the recourse to the aid of these texts at every occasion (passim). Critical studies of the original texts may result in the clarification of the meaning and the authority of the Vulgate in matters of faith and morals, or of the established use of the textus liturgicus (see above, p. 121).

2. A second major issue of modern Catholic Biblical hermeneutics is that of how to "discover and to expound" the recta significatio or the germana sententia of a given Biblical text (E.B., Nos. 550-54). In outlining the official Catholic position, Pius takes the same approach as above. All means available even from secular sciences should be brought to bear upon the text to determine the sensus or significatio litteralis, fostered by "context and comparison with similar passages" (E.B., No. 550). But the theological meaning of Scripture imbedded in the sensus litteralis through the act of inspiration can only be understood and interpreted by applying the hermeneutical principles proposed by the Roman Catholic Church, which claims to be the only legitimate representative of God commissioned to disclose the germana sententia in terms of "faith and morals" (E.B., No. 551).

The hermeneutical aids for interpreting the literal sense are provided by the rational scientific disciplines of history, archeology, philology, and the like; but for the interpretation of the theological, or religious, or spiritual sense of the Bible the following three aids are indispensable: (a) the teaching magisterium of the Church (explanationes et declarationes magisterii Ecclesiae); (b) the interpretations given by the Church Fathers; and (c) the analogia fidei. Catholic hermeneutical principles, Pius decrees, should be conceived in such a way that the professional theologian ad fidei dogmata proponenda confirmandaque, but also the parish priest ad doctrinam christianam coram populo enucleandam (E.B., No. 551).

These hermeneutical principles are to safeguard exegesis and theology from becoming either too rational, literalistic, or too spiritual, mystical. For those who, for religious reasons, overemphasize the role of history and reason over against faith, and those who, for the same reasons, neglect "history" and "reason" for the sake of faith, Biblical hermeneutics is a guide to keep them methodologically and epistemologically on the right track. For Pius XII the meaning of Scripture is neither exclusively historical, "literal," nor exclusively "spiritual," theological. In reply to the controversy of 1941 (see above, p. 118), he decrees that the spiritual sense, like the literal sense, must be a Deo ipso intentum et ordinatum and must be, or have been, revealed to us. There are altogether five criteria by which one can distinguish the genuinely-revealed "spiritual" and literal senses from the "figurative" sense (which is not intended by God): their usage in the Old Testament, by Christ, by the Apostles, in the

doctrina perpetua tradita ab Ecclesia, and in the antiquissimus liturgiae usus of the Church (E.B., No. 552).

Catholic Biblical hermeneutics permits a use and understanding of the Scripture (usum externum et adiectum) which takes the Bible not primarily as the Word of God, but as a textbook useful (utilis) for sermon illustrations and for the presentation of faith and morals in theology. But this use, Pius warns, should be indulged in only moderate ac sobrie, because such a use of Scripture depends on what a facundus orator vel scriptor, Bibliorum verbis dexteritate quadam adhibitis, exponat rather than what ipse Deus in Sacris Litteris nobis significet (E.B., No. 553). Although Pius XII does not altogether or theoretically abandon the usum externum, he practically outlaws it by impressing upon Catholic exegetes that the Word of God does not need "artificial ornaments" (calamistri) or "human adaptation" (accommodatio) to move and impress souls. If the Bible is interpreted integre et accurate, it will yield all the "treasures" it contains. By virtue of their quality of Dei afflante Spiritu exaratae, the Holy Scriptures are (1) per se abounding in original meaning (nativo sensu); (2) enriched with divina virtute having a value of their own; (3) per se lucent ac splendent because they are ornated with heavenly decor (ibid.).

The study of the Church Fathers and their exegesis is strongly recommended in the encyclical (E.B., No. 554). Patristic and Medieval hermeneutics cannot fairly be compared with modern Catholic Biblical hermeneutics and its substructures of eruditio profana. Nevertheless, the exegesis of the Holy Fathers, the Doctores Ecclesiae and other "illustrious interpreters of the

past" can serve as exemplum providing opportuna argumenta for modern Biblical interpreters, because the exegetes of old, "on account of the office God assigned to them in the Church," had been endowed with quadam eminent caelestium rerum perspicientia and with miro mentis acumine. And Pius XII holds these two hermeneutical qualities to be "conducive" to penetrating divini eloquii profunda intime and bringing to light quidquid ad doctrinam Christi illustrandam sanctitatemque vitae promovendam. From the felix et fecunda coniunctio of the doctrina and "spiritual sweetness of expression" of the veterum with the greater erudition and the adultioris ars of the recentiorum Pius XII expects "novos fructus" in Biblical interpretation, a field never fully explored and exhausted (E.B., No. 554).

3. A third point of interest is the outline given by Pius XII of the special tasks of modern Catholic Biblical hermeneutics (E.B., Nos. 555-61). Modern interpreters, the Pope hopes iure meritoque, can contribute something to the understanding of Scripture which in comparison to traditional exegesis is penitius et accuratius. Their main contribution is that ad historiam. Contrary to the opinion of some minority group in contemporary Catholicism that holds no progress possible or desirable beyond the antiquitas christiana, Pius advocates the nova investigatio of modern Biblical hermeneutics (ibid., No. 555). To cope with the modern problems and difficulties, the Catholic interpreter is to avail himself of the new subsidia et adiumenta, chief among them is the newly-defined doctrine on the "nature and effects of Biblical inspiration" (ibid., No. 556).

If for a Catholic exegete the summam interpretandi normam

is to discover and define (perspicere et definire) what the scriptor intended to say, then the problem of inspiration is indeed the central issue of modern Catholic Biblical hermeneutics. There are three aspects to the problem: (a) the "divine motion," i.e., God's revelation; (b) the peculiar character (propria indoles) and the "life conditions" of the scriptor, his time, and the written or oral traditions he was familiar with (i.e., the problem of historical and literary form criticism); and (c) the result of God's self-communication or disclosure to a particular man in a particular time, using the writer as an instrument (ibid., No. 556), through which the Dei Verbum is made hominibus simile and the Dei verba become humanis linguis expressa . . . assimilia humano sermoni. In the act of inspiration occurs what St. Chrysostom called the "condescension" of God in the act of incarnation (E.B., No. 559).

The task of Biblical hermeneutics is to see that each of these three aspects receives its full attention. Pius XII calls for special attention to be paid to the second aspect which, besides "history, archeology, ethnology, and other sciences," requires especially the study of the modus, forma et ars ratiocinandi, narrandi scribendique (E.B., Nos. 558-61). But since this task can also be executed by the profana doctrina, Catholic laymen are urged to make their contributions in this field of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics (ibid., No. 561). Complemented or supplemented by the distinctively Catholic principles of interpretation, all secular hermeneutical endeavors have their insitam dignitatem et excellentiam by virtue of their finita participatio infinitae cognitionis Dei. Scientific "profane" hermeneutics, if

it is to be employed ad res ipsas divinas clariore luce collustrandas, by serving this function acquires novam altioremque dignitatem et quasi consecrationem (E.B., No. 561). With these words Pius XII points to the methodological and epistemological presuppositions of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics which, misunderstood by modernists, Protestants, the reactionaries in the pamphlet of 1941, and the representatives of the "modern theology" of the late 1940's, had caused the antagonism to Catholic hermeneutics from within and without.[1]

4. A fourth major concern of Pius XII is that of making modern Catholic interpreters with all their hermeneutical tools to propose only interpretations that are "congruous" not only with the catholicae institutioni, but also with the genuinae a maioribus traditae sententiae (E.B., Nos. 562-65). Pius XII is the first modern pope to assure the (Catholic) world that the once-shaken fiducia of many Catholics in the authority and the historical value of the Bible has completely been restored, due mainly to the integration of "profane" hermeneutics into the Catholic system of hermeneutics. As to the lacking success in modern Catholic hermeneutics of solving all exegetical problems that Scripture presents, the Pope says, in a variation of a piece of Patristic wisdom, that God wished difficulties to be scattered throughout the Bible (and to remain there) for two reasons--that we might more intently study and scrutinize the Bible, and that we might salubriter experience mentis nostrae limites. Exegesis, like all other graviores disciplinae, has secrets which

---

[1]See Chapter VII for further comments.

our mind cannot penetrate (E.B., No. 563). The student of Scripture engaged in solving some of the difficulties should remember that any solution he wants to propose must not only fideliter concordet with the doctrine of the Church, but also satisfy certis profanarum disciplinarum conclusionibus (E.B., No. 564).

Of the many things that Scripture contains regarding legalibus, historibus, sapientialibus et propheticia only a few have been defined ab Ecclesiae auctoritate.[1] And those texts concerning which the sententia of the Church Fathers is unanimous are also "not numerous." Therefore, more exegesis and better hermeneutical principles will be necessary as condicio et fons of "solid progress" granted only to those who in the "freedom of the children of God" do both (1) adhere faithfully to the teaching magisterium of the Catholic Church, and (2) "accept and apply the cognitio profana." Pius XII sums it up as Leo XIII did, whom he quotes saying that no great progress in Biblical studies can be expected to come out of the varied studies of the many unless by salva consensione animorum and by collocatis in tuto principiis (E.B., No. 565).

5. Finally, Pius XII comes to dwell on some aspects of the use of Scripture in the Catholic Church at large. First of all the parish ministry is called upon to cultivate the preaching from Scripture for the sake of confirming christianam doctrinam. The exposition of Scripture should make the fideles not only "moved and inflamed" ad vitam recte conformandam, but also filled and growing with "the greatest veneration for the Sacred Scrip-

---

[1]See the decisions of the Biblical Commission since 1905 (English translation in Rome and the study of Scripture, pp. 115-47).

tures" (E.B., No. 566). The bishops supervising the Biblical education of the laity are charged with "increasing and perfecting among the faithful" the cognitionem et amorem of Scripture: through "daily reading" at home; by using modern translations where liturgiae leges permit it; and by giving publicas dissertationes de rebus biblicis by either the bishop himself or someone commissioned by him and versed in Biblical studies. Furthermore, the Pope urges the administri sacrorum to make use of the scientific Biblical commentaries, in order to integrate the hermeneutical principles and their applications in exegesis with vel ministerio sacro, vel fidelium utilitati. In other words, the scientific study of Scripture should be proved and documented as benefitting the clergy as well as the laity in their attempts of coming to terms with the doctrinal, liturgical,[1] devotional, and ethical expressions of the Christian faith in the modern world (E.B., No. 566).

But such hopes for "copious fruits of the apostolate" (uberes apostolatus fructus) to come from modern Biblical studies would be unwarranted and in vain, Pius XII maintains, unless there is a sound Biblical education in Catholic seminaries.[2] Hermeneutical principles and Biblical exegesis, based on the sensum litteralem but also praesertim theologicum, should be presented in

---

[1]See Pius XII, Apostolic Letter of March, 1945, "In Cotidianis Precibus," A.A.S., XXVII (1945), 65-67 (E.B., Nos. 571-75), on the use of the new Latin psalter in the liturgy designed to "excite and move ad veram genuinamque pietatem" (E.B., No. 574).

[2]See new instructions issued by Pius XII, "De Scriptura Sacra in clericorum seminariis et religiosorum collegiis recte docenda," A.A.S., XXXIII (1950), 495-505 (E.B., Nos. 582-610).

such a way (solide, scite, ardenter) that the young priest will come to consider the Bible for the rest of his life not only as a "pure and perennial fons vitae spiritualis, but also a supply and strength (alimentum ac robur) for relevantly preaching the Christian faith to the modern world (E.B., No. 567).

The whole encyclical ends on the same note as the Bible encyclical of Benedict XV (see above, p. 110). Pointing to Jerome's saying of ignorantia Scripturarum ignorantia Christi est, Pius XII holds that the assiduous cognitio and meditatio of Scripture, particularly of the New Testament, will bring all Christians to a fuller (plenius) understanding of the salutis auctorem Christum (E.B., No. 568). For once it seems deceptively obvious that the Roman Pontiff sees the ecumenical implications of Biblical hermeneutics in the understanding and application of Scripture which would result in, or presuppose, the recognition of the supreme auctoritas of Christ. For once it appears as if the Catholic Church would see in the use and understanding of the Bible alone the divinae gratise fontes which satisfy man's political and spiritual thirst for animorum concordiam (E.B., No. 568), by inviting, urging all to discere Christum. But the Catholic Church, like some non-Catholic churches, claims to be not only the ecclesia discens (the hearing, listening, learning church) but also ecclesia docens (the speaking, teaching church). It claims that the Bible cannot interpret itself--that Christ cannot exert his auctoritas except through the Church. The hermeneutical principles of interpretation, both as to method and content, are for a Roman Catholic, if not identical, at least in agreement with, or supplemented by, the dogmatical principles of

the Catholic Tradition and the present teaching magisterium of the Church.

The final paragraph (E.B., No. 569) of the encyclical Divino Afflante Spiritu is an outline of the Catholic approach to Biblical hermeneutics. The major concern of the modern pontiffs is to keep the traditional Catholic approach flexible and progressive by accommodating the studia of Scripture to present-day "necessities," on the one hand the progress of "profane sciences"--on the other hand the required polemical or apologetical reaction against misinterpretations of Scripture by people from within and without the Catholic Church. And there is also, of course, the task of accommodating present-day Biblical studies to the exegetical, hermeneutical tradition in the history of Catholic dogma, liturgy, ethics, and devotion (see Chapter VI below). But to qualify for this task Pius decrees that modern Biblical interpreters (theological scholars, clergy, and laity) must be devoti filii Ecclesiae following fideliter the Church's doctrinae et normis. Catholic Biblical hermeneutics, studied and applied, are to make the student of Scripture not only a better Christian by growing in Dei cognitionem et amorem and animi profectum et felicitatem, but more specifically a better Catholic. When Pius XII quotes St. Augustine's hermeneutical maxim Orent ut intelligant he does not simply imply that any lex orandi is also the Catholic lex intellegendi or lex interpretandi; rather he implies that only the Roman Catholic liturgical, dogmatical, devotional tradition can be a reliable guide for those who want to penetrate more deeply (altius introspicere) "the secrets of Sacred Scripture," and to teach and preach the thesauros verbi Dei to others.

The latest developments of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics from 1943 till today can be analyzed from three different historical perspectives as developments (1) either in response to the program outlined by Pius XII in the encyclical Divino Afflante Spiritu, (2) or in polemical reaction to persisting, or newly-risen, controversy over Biblical exegesis within the Catholic Church, (3) or in the critical self-evaluation of its own shortcomings.

As to the optimistic progress in response to the Papal encyclical, there is to be found, for one, a continuing trend of establishing Biblical societies[1] to serve the assumed needs of the clergy and laity. Hermeneutica Practica is the designation of the growing variety of literature[2] in which hermeneutical theory, as outlined in the Papal decrees, is applied to the actual use and understanding of the Bible. This application is most noticeable in the promotion of the devotional use of Scripture[3]

---

[1] L'Association Catholique d'Études Bibliques au Canada (since 1944), and the publication of Cultura Biblica (since 1944), a more popular version of the Estudios Bíblicos, the two periodicals published by the Associación para el Fomento de los Estudios Biblicos en España. The Australian Biblical Association was founded in 1952. The Associazione Biblica Italiana published the Rivista Biblica in 1953. The only Catholic Biblical review in South America, Revista Biblica, appeared in 1954.

[2] See paragraph "Hermeneutica Practica" in the annual Elenchus Bibliographicus of the periodical Biblica (Pontifical Biblical Institute). For an analytical presentation of only the Continental European literature, see J. Coppens, "L'efflorescence des études bibliques sur le vieux Continent," Analecta Lovanensis Biblica et Orientalia (1954), pp. 51-65.

[3] A multitude of newly-issued periodicals and Bible series claim to serve this cause, e.g., Bible et Vie Chrétienne, Bible et Missel, Verbum Dei, Verbum Salutis, Lectio Divina (all from Belgium or France), and a Polish publication Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny (Biblical and Liturgical Movement).

and of modern translations.[1] The revived interest in Patristic hermeneutics[2] is another sign of the positive and constructive response to the encyclical of 1943. Still another feature of how relevant Biblical hermeneutics became to modern Catholicism is the role of exegesis in speculative, dogmatical theology, manifest in the controversy over the sensus plenior[3] and in the debate over the Scriptural foundation of the new Marian dogma[4] proclaimed in November, 1950. Another trend in recent years is the gathering of the first fruit of the new harvest by categorizing

---

[1]In America: the Confraternity Bible (1941); in England: the Westminster Bible (1913-35) and the translation by Ronald Knox (1939-49). Cf. review articles on modern English Bible translations by S. Bullough and J. M. T. Barton in Scripture, III (1948), 13-19; IV (1949), 102-106; in Belgium and France: the translation by Bernard Botte (1944); La Sainte Bible, Editions du Cerf, a translation under the direction of the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem and in cooperation with scholars like G. Marcel, E. Gilson, and H. I. Marrou (since 1948), and La Sainte Bible, Edition de Maredsous (1950). Cf. notable Protestant review by S. de Diétrich, "New Roman Catholic versions of the Bible," Ecumenical Review, II (1950), 314-16; in Germany: the translation by J. Schmid, A. Wikenhauser, et al. (completed 1947), the Riessler-Storr translation (1949), and Herders Laienbibel (1949); in Italy: the translations by S. Garofalo (1948) and S. Quasimodo (since 1950).

[2]Note the following publications after 1943: C. Mondésert (1944), P. T. Camelot (1945), and M. Hermaniuk (1945) on Clement of Alexandria; H, de Lubac and J. Daniélou (1943, 1948) on Origen; J. Laplace (1944) on Gregory of Nyssa; M. Pontet (1945) on Augustine; G. Bardy (1947) on Hippolytus; J. P. Brisson (1947) on Hilary of Poitiers; R. Devreese (1948) on Theodore of Mopsuestia; A. Penna (1950) on Jerome; A. Kerrigan (1952) on Cyril of Alexandria.

[3]R. E. Brown, The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture (Baltimore, 1955); E. F. Siegman, "The use of Sacred Scripture in textbooks of dogmatic theology," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XI (1949), 151-64; L. G. Burke, "Holy Scripture as a locus theologicus," ibid., pp. 351-69.

[4]E. C. Messenger, "Our Lady in the Scriptures," in A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, ed. B. Orchard (New York, 1954), pp. 113-16.

the varied results of the Biblical renaissance in modern Catholicism. Outstanding examples of this encyclopedic trend in modern Catholic exegesis are to be found in all countries.[1] Worth noticing are also the "ecumenical" strategies based on world-wide interchurch Bible studies.[2] But due to the polemical situation that prevailed within the Catholic Church during the 1940's all "irenism" (the Catholic word for "ecumenism") was ill-fated.

Under the persisting[3] and newly-developed[4] controversies over the hermeneutical orientation of Catholic Biblical exegesis, the hermeneutical program of Pius XII had to be redefined and specified as to what it did and did not imply. Against those who misused Catholic Biblical hermeneutics by adapting its principles unrestrainedly to modern science and philosophy, or by raising false irenical hopes, Pius XII spoke out on August 12,

---

[1]In France: A. Robert, A. Tricot (eds.), Initiation Biblique (2d ed., Paris, 1948). In the United States: J. E. Steinmueller, K. Sullivan, Catholic Biblical encyclopedia (New York, 1950). In Germany: Internationale Zeitschriftenschau für die Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete, published by Katholisches Bibelwerk Stuttgart, 1951/52 ff. In England: see commentary cited in n. 4, p. 137. In Italy: Enchiridion Biblicum, 2d & 3d eds. 1954, 1956.

[2]See, e.g., C. Moeller, "Bible et Oecuménism," Irénikon, XXIII (1950), 164-88.

[3]Although no more anonymous pamphlets like that in 1941 (see above, p. 118) were circulated, the reactionary spirit kept working underground. In a personal interview with a faculty member of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, I learned that in 1955 the Institute and the program it stands for was again under a spell of sharp criticism from the "outside."

[4]Pius XII first warned against a "new theology" in a speech before the Fathers of the 29th Congregation of the Society of Jesus, on September 17, 1946 (A.A.S., XXXVIII [1946], 385). On the background of this "new theology" and its representatives (H. de Lubac's Le Surnaturel!), see G. Weigel, in Theological Studies, XII (1957), 212ff.

1950.[1] This encyclical, taking issue with certain hermeneutical principles based on the "new theology," must be understood as complementing the encyclical Divino Afflante Spiritu and not as emphasizing any new points. The polemical situation dictated the arguments. Whether the opponents are thought of as advocates of French existentialism[2] or Kantian criticism[3] the hermeneutical issue at stake is the same old problem of the proper relationship of history and faith, of the literal and spiritual sense, or of how the "propositions of Scripture" (i.e., the literal sense, history, and the like) relate to the "propositions of theology" (i.e., the rational, philosophical structure of faith and morals and their supernatural content).

Pius XII repeats, by declaring his solidarity with the hermeneutical tradition of the Catholic Church from the Council of Trent till his own latest encyclical (E.B., No. 613), that all exegesis of Scripture has been entrusted to the Roman Church by Jesus Himself.[4] To take the relationship of history and faith, of the literal and spiritual sense, and use only one of the two aspects of this relationship as the exclusive norm for

---

[1]Encyclical Humani Generis, A.A.S., XLII (1950), 561-78 (see excerpts E.B., Nos. 611-20).

[2]G. Weigel, "The historical background of the encyclical Humani Generis," Theological Studies, XII (1951), 221-29.

[3]G. Piccoli, "Una nuova esegesi biblica?" Città di Vita, VI (1951), 456 f.

[4]Sacra Scriptura exponenda ad mentem Ecclesiae, quae a Christo Domino totius depositi veritatis divinitus revelatae custos ac interpres constituta est" (E.B., No. 612).

not only history or faith respectively, but also the tradition and the present teaching magisterium of the Church, resulted in a fourfold heresy concerning Catholic hermeneutical principles. Against the theory that the inerrancy of the Biblical witness is limited to the moral and religious truths; against the division of Scripture into divine and human elements, holding only the hidden divine, spiritual meaning to be infallible; against those holding the scientific and theological interpretation to be independent from the analogia fidei and the tradition of the Church; and against the advocates of substituting a spiritual interpretation for the literal--Pius XII sets forth the one fundamental hermeneutical principle of Catholicism; its presupposition is that all theology and all scientific exegesis derives from two divinae revelationis fontes, Scripture and Tradition, a vivo Magisterio docentur (E.B., No. 611); the basic principle is that, in Scripture by divine inspiration, in Tradition by divine Institution, the human and divine element are inseparable but not mixed. The essence of what is decreed in Humani Generis is nothing more and nothing less than the Chalcedonian Christology applied to Biblical hermeneutics.[1]

As a third perspective from which to analyze the developments of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics since 1943, there appears the growing caution or discontent over the impact of Biblical hermeneutics on Catholic theology and theological education. In the question asked by the editor of the official organ of the Catholic

---

[1]See encyclical Sempiternus Rex of 1951 (A.A.S., XLIII [1951], 625-44) celebrating the 15th centennial of the Council of Chalcedon. Here Pius refutes the Protestant and Modernist concepts of kenosis. Cf. above, p. 109 and p. 130, on hermeneutics and Christology.

Biblical Association of England, in an article entitled "Is Scripture to remain the Cinderella of Catholic theology?"[1] a new sentiment is voiced. Over against the optimism of those seeing Biblical studies finally coming into their own in modern Catholicism,[2] (which could almost make one believe that exegesis, the traditional Cinderella, was to become the Fairy Princess)[3] Worden calls for a more critical and constructive appraisal avoiding both extremes, the reactionary and the modernist attitude. The sin of modern Catholic interpreters is not one of excess, but of defect in using hermeneutical principles of the scientific or theological kind (ibid., p. 12). There ought to be more scientific research accompanying the use and understanding of the Bible, and not less of it.

The critical and constructive approach toward a comprehensive hermeneutical orientation of modern Catholic exegesis and theology, as evident in the writings of representative scholars such as Worden, is based on the growing emphasis on integrating the full doctrinal tradition with the modern scientific approach. It is related to the already familiar attempt of introducing a third pole into the discussion of the polarity of Scripture and its modern scientific critical analysis--the dogma, liturgy, ethics of the Church as known in and through the tradi-

---

[1]T. Worden, in Scripture, VIII (January, 1956), 2-12.

[2]See, e.g., R. Aubert, La théologie Catholique au milieu du XXe siècle (Paris, 1954). C. Charlier, "Typologie ou Evolution," Esprit et Vie, VIII (1948), 581, thinks twentieth century Catholic exegesis deserves to be praised for having revealed Holy Scripture à l'humanité. Similar views are shared by most modern Catholics.

[3]Worden, op. cit., p. 2.

tion, and taught by the present magisterium of the Church. The Papal encyclicals had already emphasized this point;[1] and a similar approach was noticeable in the current debate on Biblical hermeneutics in Ecumenical Protestantism.[2] The difference between the Catholic and Protestant emphases on integrating dogmatical theology with Biblical exegesis and its hermeneutical criteria is due to the varying degrees of identifying the right and normative theological (apostolic) tradition with any one particular institution, its history and creeds.

Looking at the total development of modern Catholic Biblical hermeneutics as a part of the Biblical Renaissance in the Catholic Church the following observations seem worthy to be summarized.

1. Over against the deep-rooted Protestant "pride and prejudice" which claims that Catholic theology has yet to face up to the issues posed by modern Biblical criticism,[3] the facts speak for themselves. The hermeneutical program realized at the École Biblique and the Pontifical Biblical Institute incorporates as much Biblical criticism as any Protestant could want. If the Roman Catholic Church, purely on the basis of its hermeneutical program, ever deserved to be called "the Church of the

---

[1] See above, p. 91 (point 3); p. 92 f.; p. 109 f.; p. 131 f. (point 4).

[2] See above, pp. 42-45; p. 48; p. 52 f.; p. 62 f.; p. 64 et passim.

[3] H. Hermelink, Die Katholische Kirche unter den Pius-Päpsten des 20. Jahrhunderts (Zurich, 1949), p. 113: "dem Katholizismus steht die Auseinandersetzung mit den Resultaten der historisch-kritischen und erbaulichen Bibelarbeit noch bevor." Similarly W. Schweitzer, Schrift und Dogma (Gütersloh, 1953), p. 17 f. See below, p. 160 f.

Bible,"[1] it would be today.

2. The study of Biblical hermeneutics in modern Catholicism is motivated by the following issues: (a) the challenge of modern science, particularly of fields relevant to Biblical studies, such as philology, history, archeology, literary criticism, and the like; (b) the light shed on some of the historical and dogmatical presuppositions of Biblical studies by the Patristic and Liturgical Renaissance in modern Catholicism; (c) the revival of Thomist methodology and epistemology with its emphasis on the priority of the literal sense of Scripture; (d) the controversies with a variety of modern misrepresentations of the nature and tradition of Catholic hermeneutics, such as Protestant Biblical scholarship, Catholic Modernists, Catholic reactionary Conservatives, and the representatives of the so-called "new theology" of the 1940's; (e) the need of reforming the theological education of the clergy by introducing critical and hermeneutical studies of Scripture into the academic curriculum, and the religious education of the laity by promoting a popular use and understanding of the Bible.

3. There is a keen awareness of the latent danger in the contemporary revival of Biblical studies, that of arriving at a "double truth,"[2] one Scriptural, the other dogmatical. The safeguards that modern Catholic theologians have sought and found as manifest in the "évolution doctrinale"[3] of the Papal encycli-

---

[1]The claim was recently made and defended by the late C. Lattey (S.J.) in Scripture, I (1946), 25-30.

[2]J. Coppens, op. cit., p. 51 f.

[3]G. Courtade, op. cit., p. 377.

cals are the hermeneutical theories of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, and the hermeneutical concept of a new Biblical meaning--the sensus plenior, or the spiritual, theological sense of Scripture. The hermeneutical problem par excellence of how to establish the unity not only of the Old and New Testaments, but also of the whole Bible with the Christian witness, the doctrinal, theological, and the sacramental, liturgical development and tradition of the Church, specifically the church of Rome, is presently approached by Catholic exegetes in terms of those two safeguards.[1]

4. The hermeneutical debate in modern Catholic theology, significant enough for the Roman pontiffs to take an active, constructive interest in it, is not concerned with the issue of the "right" over against the "wrong" interpretation (the traditional categories of inter-church polemics), but rather with the criteria of distinguishing between different grades of depth and fulness of understanding and interpretation. It is the issue of what is the most adequate, most comprehensive, fullest meaning of Scripture over against less adequate, inadequate, partial understandings.[2] The same concern is evident in contemporary ecumenical Protestantism and may express itself even in identical vocabulary, such as the demand for the hermeneutical criteria of the Canon of Scripture, the Tradition, the Church, the "analogy of faith," and the like. But Catholic theology, now as ever, interprets these criteria exclusively in terms of their visible,

---

[1]On details see below, Chapter VII.

[2]Lattey, op. cit.; cf. below, p. 182 f.

historically empirical and institutionalized representations: the Vulgate Canon, the Latin Tradition, the Roman Catholic Church and its Curia, and the analogy of traditional Catholic faith.

5. Biblical hermeneutics is relevant for modern Catholicism primarily because of its usefulness in justifying and propagating the tradition of the Latin Church. Exegetical principles have their "ecumenical" relevance for the Catholic Church and Catholic theology because it is thought that through them the continuity of the eschatological revelation of God in Christ and His Church can be demonstrated even scientifically and intelligibly. It can be demonstrated by hermeneutics at least up to a certain point, the limit of the value of hermeneutical theories as that of all theological methodology; it is the same limitation that ratio and intelligentia are subject to in the "constructive theology" of Thomas Aquinas.

If it were not for the apologetic task of all branches of theological science to make the Christian (i.e., Roman Catholic) faith rationally intelligible to the non-Christian (i.e., non-Catholic) world (including not only all unbelievers, but also all Christian churches not in communion with the Holy See), Biblical hermeneutics would be of little use to Roman Catholics. This is documented by the persisting but latent protests of reactionary conservatives (like those behind the anonymous pamphlet of 1941) against the scientific study of Scripture, and by their plea for substituting Biblical hermeneutics by dogmatical studies and spiritual exercises. Against this trend all the popes since Leo XIII have protested on the basis of the Neo-Thomist epistemology they decreed for all theological work. Biblical hermeneu-

tics, then, in the minds of the modern Roman pontiffs is part of the constructive theological task Catholic theology is called upon to execute in order to render "Faith" intelligibly and relevantly. This Catholic conception of the nature and function of Biblical hermeneutics differs from that advocated by the member churches of the Protestant World Council of Churches and its Division of Studies in only one essential point--not in its objectives, not in its tools used to realize it, but only in the identification of "eschatological revelation" and "eschatological faith" with a particular historical tradition, an empirical institution, and with philosophical, legal, and dogmatical propositions.

CHAPTER VI

MODERN CATHOLIC REVIEWS OF THE HISTORY OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

A review of modern Catholic studies of the history of Biblical hermeneutics will prove of great help in our continuing attempt of specifying the contemporary Catholic approaches to, and conceptions of, the theological and "ecumenical" implications of hermeneutical theory.

The history of the Judeo-Christian faith is in part a history of the actual forms and historical expressions of this faith; in part it is also a history of rendering this faith intelligibly, and as such becomes the history of theology. Biblical hermeneutics was one aspect of theology ever since the Judeo-Christian faith had a written document to consider as the charter of its faith. What christology, the doctrines of God, Man, and the Church, what liturgics and ethics on their part were created for--to explain certain constituents of revelation and religious life as relevant to the "world" and to the Church--that was also the task of Biblical hermeneutics concerning the nature of the Bible and the use and understanding of the Bible by the "world" and the Church.

In the presentation of this chapter, then, the interpretations of the history of Biblical hermeneutics by modern theolo-

gians[1] and by the modern pontiffs in their Biblical encyclicals must be evaluated in conjunction with those interpretations of details of the history of theology and of religious life which have direct bearings for the problem of Biblical hermeneutics as discussed in present-day Roman Catholicism. Hermeneutical issues had been debated, of course, even before the rise of Christianity. Exegetes and historians among the Catholic theologians are, like non-Catholic theologians, cognizant of the long-established fact that Christian theology inherited both the Jewish, Rabbinical and the Greek, Hellenistic, Roman theories of interpretation, which reflect either a concept of religion and revelation or a concept of philosophy, rhetoric, or poetics. The ways in which these two strands of hermeneutical inheritance were used and understood in Christian theology present themselves as a most complex interplay of religious and philosophical ideas, of ecclesiastical institutions, spiritual movements, and of the influential work of individual theologians and scholars. The attempts that modern Catholic theologians have made to analyze this interplay may best be presented by grouping them according to their underlying motives or criteria.

A first group is distinguishable by its motive of tracing the origin of Biblical hermeneutics back into the Old and New

---

[1]Representative are: A. Durand, "Histoire Sommaire de la critique biblique," Dictionnaire Apologétique de la foi catholique, I (1925), 761-80; A. Robert and A. Tricot (eds.), Initiation Biblique (2d ed.; Paris, 1948), chap. ix, pt. 1; J. E. Steinmueller, A companion to Scripture studies, I (1948), 231-49; J. Schildenberger, Vom Geheimnis des Gotteswortes (Heidelberg, 1950), 471-503; A. Penna, "Interpretazione Biblica," Enciclopedia Cattolica, VII (1951), 105-108; idem, La lettera di Dio (Brescia, 1952).

Testaments.[1] But in doing so, members of this group differ in their judgment as to what aspects of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics are substantiated by the evaluation of the historical background. The principles of Biblical interpretation known today are said to be fashioned after the hermeneutical pattern that Biblical writers follow in their reinterpretation of earlier Biblical oral or written traditions. Thus Catholic exegetes and historians detect a certain hermeneutical pattern in the Deuteronomist reinterpretation of the J and E account of the origin and goal of the religious and political institutions of Israel, or the religiously-motivated reinterpretation of the "Law" and the "Prophets" in the poetic and sapiential literature, and in the legalistic or apocalyptic literature of synagogal and hellenistic Judaism of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and in the writings preserved by the Qumrâm sectarians. The very translation of the Septuagint implied a hermeneutical procedure.[2] Biblical hermeneutics according to the New Testament is the continuation of the hermeneutical patterns known to Judaism. Methodologically,

---

[1]H. de Lubac, "Sens Spirituel," Recherches de Science Religieuse, XXXVI (1949), 542-76; R. E. Brown, The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture (Baltimore, 1955), pp. 30 ff.; P. Auvray, "Ecriture et Tradition dans la communauté d'Israel," Bible et Vie Chrétienne, XII (1955), 19-34; A. Gelin, "Comment le peuple d'Israel lisait l'Ancient Testament," L'Ancient Testament et les Chretiens (Paris, 1951); ibid., article by L. Cerfaux, "L'exégèse de l'Ancien Testament par le Nouveau Testament"; J. Bonsirven, Exégèse Rabbinique et exégèse Paulinienne (Paris, 1939); idem, "Exégèse Juive," D.B.S., IV (1949), 561-69; L. Cerfaux, "Simple réflexions à propos de l'exégèse apostolique," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, XXV (1949), 565-76; J. Coppens, Les harmonies des deux Testaments (Paris, 1949); J. van der Ploeg, "L'exégèse de l'Ancien Testament dans l'épitre aux Hebreux," Revue Biblique, LIV (1947), 187-228.

[2]Gelin, op. cit., p. 129, calls the LXX "an exegesis of the Hebrew text."

Christian hermeneutics is conceived just like the Old Testament, Jewish system--a theologically-motivated reinterpretation of the Canonical Old Testament and Apocryphal tradition as well as of the oral and written traditions about Jesus.

Concentrating on any one of these issues, or reviewing the whole development in both Testaments, Catholic theologians specify their interest in the origin of Biblical hermeneutics in three ways: (1) apologetically, by trying to prove that the contemporary Catholic preoccupation with the spiritual, theological, or "fuller" sense is authentically Biblical;[1] (2) polemically, by pointing out that some of the hermeneutical devices of spiritualization and allegorization, in Scripture as well as in modern Biblical hermeneutics, are secondary "accommodations," "forced and abnormal";[2] (3) historically, by identifying some of the Biblical patterns of interpretation that have the appearance of being genuinely Biblical as resembling or reflecting non-Christian, non-Biblical hermeneutical principles of Greek or Hellenistic origin. Through contacts or controversies with Hellenistic and Rabbinical Judaism, Christianity assimilated them into its own Biblical hermeneutics.[3]

The New Testament together with the Old Testament in the Canon of Holy Scripture is said to contain *in nuce* all the basic

---

[1]Brown, *op. cit.*, *passim*; Coppens, *op. cit.*; cf. Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (*E.B.*, No. 552).

[2]Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

[3]Bonsirven, *op. cit.*; C. Spicq, "Le Philonisme de l'épitre aux Hébreux," *Revue Biblique*, LVI (1949), 542-72; LVII, 212-42; see also LVIII, 481-502. Cf. articles by W. H. Kent in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, XXVI (1902), 297-308; 659-67; XXVII, 517-30; XXIX, 123-36.

elements that constitute Catholic Biblical hermeneutics: the notion of inspiration; the literal, historical sense; and the typological, theological meaning derived from the literal sense.[1] To know how to derive it authentically, i.e., methodologically and theologically correct, and to distinguish between typology and allegory, is a privilege granted only to the Latin Church, in which the truly Biblical concept of hermeneutics was preserved; Protestants never had the full share of it.[2] Modern Catholic exegetes claim to be using the hermeneutical criteria that are authentically Biblical. The Church Fathers, since Irenaeus and Origen,[3] merely "imitated and prolonged" (de Lubac) the Apostolic hermeneutics, especially Paul's.

A second group of modern Catholic scholars can be distinguished from the rest by their emphasis on the influence of the culture and science of a time upon the conception of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics and its development. The earliest development was influenced by both Judaism, mainly its Rabbinical form, and Hellenism. The influence of Greek, Hellenistic terminology and methodology concerning interpretation upon Patristic hermeneutics has been the object of many studies in recent years.[4]

---

[1] É. Amann, "Type," Dictionnaire de la théologie Catholique, XV (1950), 1935-45.

[2] A. J. Maas, "Types in Scripture," Catholic Encyclopedia, XV (1912), 107-108.

[3] J. P. Brisson, Hilaire de Poitiers (Paris, 1947), pp. 41-60; H. de Lubac, Histoire et Esprit (Paris, 1950), p. 231; J. Daniélou, Sacramentum Futuri (Paris, 1950), pp. 257-58.

[4] E.g.: A. Vaccari, "La 'theoria' nella scuola esegetica di Antiochia," Biblica, I (1920), 3-36; ibid., XV (1934), 93-101; K. Prümm, "Mysterion von Paulus bis Origenes," Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie, LXI (1937), 391-425; H. de Lubac on "allegory," see Histoire et Esprit (Paris, 1950).

the continuation of the teaching of Classical Greek philosophy during the period of the early Church Fathers,[1] and the periodic renaissance of Classical studies during the Middle Ages till modern times,[2] influenced the rational, scientific structure of Biblical interpretation for better[3] or for worse.[4] The great centers of Classical learning, Alexandria,[5] Antioch,[6] Nisibis,[7] Caesarea,[8] and others, also became famous exegetical schools,

---

[1]L. Allevi, Ellenismo e Cristianesimo (Milan, 1934); H. I. Marrou, History of education in antiquity (New York, 1956); idem, Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique (Paris, 1938); G. Bardy, "L'église et l'enseignement ... ," Revue des sciences religieuses (several articles in 1932-35).

[2]J. Champomier, "Naissance de l'humanisme chrétien," Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé, Nouvelle Series, Vol. III (1947); M. Landgraf, Einführung in die Geschichte der theologischen Literatur der Frühscholastik (Regensburg, 1948); M. Grabmann, Methoden und Hilfsmittel des Aristotelesstudiums im Mittelalter (München, 1939); C. S. Baldwin, Medieval rhetoric and poetic (New York, 1928); S. Garofalo, "Gli umanisti italiani del secolo XV e la Bibbia," Biblica, XXVII (1946), 338-75; A. Allgeier, "Begriff und Wege der Biblischen Einleitung," Bonner Biblische Beiträge, I (1950), 1-15; see also Pius XII, Divino Afflante Spiritu (see above, p. 124, n. 1).

[3]According to C. Spicq, Esquisse d'une histoire de l'exégèse latine au moyen age (Paris, 1944).

[4]According to J. Lebreton, "Le désaccord de la foi populaire et de la théologie savante ... ," Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique, XIX (1923), 481-506; XX, 5-37.

[5]J. Salaverri, "La filosofía en la Escuela Alejandria," Gregorianum, XV (1934), 485-99; G. Bardy, "Aux origines de l'école d'Alexandrie," Recherches de science religieuse, XXVII (1937), 65-90.

[6]F. Vigouroux, "École exégétique d'Antioche," Dictionnaire de la Bible, I (1926), 683-87; G. Bardy, "The exegetical school of Antioch," in Guide to the Bible, A. Robert and A. Tricot (eds.), I (1951), 460-62.

[7]H. Kihn, Theodor von Mopsuestia und Junilius Africanus als Exegeten (Freiburg, 1880), preface, pp. vi ff.

[8]H. R. Nelz, Die theologischen Schulen der morgenländischen Kirchen (Bonn, 1916), pp. 40 ff.

each contributing its share to the rise of "divergent hermeneutical theories"[1] that characterize the medieval and modern development of Biblical hermeneutics.

For Lebreton, however, the result of a sophisticated theology with its elaborate theories of interpretation for making Scripture intelligible to both heretics and philosophers was a growing désaccord between popular faith and scientific theology, between the simple believer of the traditional church and the scholars of the exegetical schools. The danger lies not with the concept of a scientific theology or hermeneutical theory, but with its one-sided orientation towards the "world," neglecting its simultaneous responsibility toward the Church.

While Jerome is credited as being the first to have successfully integrated the sciences known to him with Biblical interpretation,[2] it is Thomas Aquinas whose systematic treatment of the nature of the Bible[3] and of Biblical exegesis[4] is considered as the Catholic ideal of combining scientific methodology, speculative theology, spiritual devotion, and dedication to the tradi-

---

[1]Spicq, op. cit., p. 372, "ces herméneutiques divergentes."

[2]Benedict XV, Spiritus Paraclitus (see above, pp. 106-11).

[3]B. Lonergan, "The concept of 'Verbum' in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas," Theological Studies, VII (1946), 349-92; VIII, 35-79, 404-444; X, 3-40, 359-93.

[4]Spicq, op. cit., pp. 141-330; A. Gardeil, "Les procédés exégétiques de S. Thomas," Revue Thomiste, II (1903), 428-57; A. Vaccari, "S. Tommaso e Lutero nella storia dell'esegesi," La Civiltà Cattolica, II (1934-35), 561-75; III, 36-47; H. Pope, St. Thomas as an interpreter of Holy Script (Oxford, 1924).

tion of the Church of Rome.[1] All earlier[2] and later[3] attempts of integrating scientific and dogmatical traditions with whatever benefit for the progress of Biblical hermeneutics were only approximations to the Thomist ideal. What makes the Thomist system so ingeneous is its combination of two significant hermeneutical traditions, each of which in its own way had made attempts of integrating Classical learning with Biblical exegesis: (1) the exegetical work of learned representatives of the Church's hierarchy, secular clergy, and the theological schools;[4] (2) the spiritual and exegetical tradition of monasticism[5] and of the various religious orders.[6]

The historical development and the system of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics are said to present and preserve the peculiarly Catholic integration of scientific hermeneutical principles with the theological and devotional principles relevant to Biblical interpretation.[7] All non-Catholic Biblical hermeneutics, as well as some unorthodox Catholic theories (over-sophisticated

---

[1]Leo XIII (see above, p. 85, n. 4); Pius XI, Deus Scientiarum Dominus, A.A.S., XXIII (1931), 241-62, 263-84.

[2]E.g.: Origen, Jerome, Augustine, Eucher, Cassiodore, et al.

[3]E.g.: Gerson, Nicolaus of Lyra, the Humanists, and the early work of the Jesuit order (see Dictionnaire de la Bible, III [1903], 1403-421).

[4]Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, Cassiodore, Newman, et al.

[5]Cassian, the Cappadocian Fathers, Gregory the Great, et al.

[6]On Biblical studies in the religious orders, see Dictionnaire de la Bible, II (1899), 1463-82 (on Dominicans), 2373-94 (on Franciscans).

[7]See below, Chapter VII.

Origenism or mystical Augustinianism, Thomism, etc.) are found to violate the integrity of the Catholic system either because of too rationalistic a concept of the intelligibility of Scripture as in part of the Alexandrian, Antiochian, Thomist, Humanist, or modern Rationalist tradition, or because of too spiritualized a concept of hermeneutics, the latent danger in the hermeneutical tradition of monasticism, early Christian gnosticism or humanism, and the mysticism of the devotio moderna.[1]

A third group of theologians and historians appears to be emphasizing still another point--how the various polemical controversies with heretical Christian or non-Christian faiths influenced the growth of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics from its beginning. The influence of Rabbinical Judaism upon early Christian hermeneutics has already been noted (see above, p. 150, n. 3). Rabbinical hermeneutics continue to influence Catholic Biblical hermeneutics all through the Middle Ages, mainly in terms of philological studies.[2] Nicolaus of Lyra, Sixtur of Siena, and other converts from Judaism who became devoted exegetes sustained the influence,[3] resulting in greater emphasis on the literal, historical meaning of the Old Testament, as well as on elaborate typological, allegorical schemes in Catholic hermeneutics.

---

[1]On the hermeneutical issues in the Ruysbroeck-Gerson controversy, see A. Combes, Essai sur la critique de Ruysbroeck par Gerson, I (Paris, 1945).

[2]A. Vaccari, "Iudaeorum scholae," Institutiones Biblicae, I (1925), 265-67; Penna, Lettera, p. 304; Brown, op. cit., p. 59, n. 119; A. Landgraf, "Ein frühscholastischer Traktat über die Bibelexegese der Juden," Biblica, XXXVII (1956), 403-409.

[3]Spicq, op. cit., p. 142 f.; p. 217 et passim. Cf. G. Vajda, Introduction à la pensée juive du moyen âge, Etudes de de philosophie medievale, No. 35 (Paris, n.d.).

Gnostic theories of Biblical exegesis have influenced the formation of Catholic Biblical interpretation either directly through the Christian gnosticism at Alexandria,[1] or indirectly by compelling the orthodox theologians to introduce hermeneutical principles that were more adequate than the gnostic ones. Thus the hermeneutical concepts of the salvation-economy and of the historical; spiritual unity of the two Testaments were fully developed (Irenaeus and others).[2] The controversy with representatives of the devotio moderna and Humanism, and with Protestantism and earlier reform movements, brought about still further clarification as to what Catholic Biblical hermeneutics understood itself to be. The various Papal announcements concerning Biblical hermeneutics that were issued during the two centuries before the Reformation[3] make it evident that some hermeneutical issues were far from being clearly defined, or needed to be redefined. For one, the study of the Biblical and other Oriental languages received Papal approval (ibid., Nos. 41-43); furthermore, concerning a controversy with heretics over a particular issue with Biblical implications, it was implied in a Papal Constitution of 1323 that right exegesis of Scripture and "orthodox," Catholic faith go hand in hand (ibid., No. 44); other documents (ibid. Nos. 46-49) take as hermeneutical criterion the Canon of Scripture as Rome defines it.

Finally, and unmistakably Catholic, it was decreed that any claim of hermeneutically correct interpretations, "even if

---

[1]Daniélou, Origène, pp. 190-98.

[2]D. van den Eynde, op. cit., pp. 132 ff.; P. Lestringant, Essai sur l'unité de la révélation biblique (Paris, 1942), pp. 185-204; L. Cerfaux, article in D.B.S., III (1936), 659-701; G. Bardy, ibid., II (1934), 77 f. Cf. W. I. Burghardt, "On early Christian exegesis," Theological Studies, XI (1950), 78-116.

[3]E.B., Nos. 41-56.

employing a speciali Scripturarum testimonio," must still be dismissed as heretical if such a claim is not in harmony with what sentiat aut doceat Ecclesia (E.B., No. 51). Identifying the norm of Catholic Biblical interpretation with the decreed dogmas and the institutional authority of the Church of Rome was also the content of the hermeneutical decreed issued by the Council of 1527-28 (ibid., Nos. 52-56) and above all by the Oecumenical Council at Trent in 1546 (ibid., Nos. 57-72). The traditional Christian principle of interpretation, recognizing the Church as the only adequate norm and criterion, had become polemically redefined, taking "Church" to be the Roman Curia.

And yet not all of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics developed in polemical antagonism to non-Catholic, heretical theories of practices of interpretation. With Döllinger's thesis that modern Catholicism can be understood simply in terms of its reaction to the Reformation and the French Revolution undergoing a revision in modern Catholic theology,[1] it was also recognized in reappraising the tradition of Catholic hermeneutics that there existed a consistent evolution of hermeneutical theories since Biblical beginnings, essentially independent from outside polemical stimulations. Thus, modern Catholic Biblical exegetes can claim that today's orthodox hermeneutical theories are the final outgrowth of a homogeneous theological development that dates back to the Old Testament and its use by Christ and the apostles; that continues in patristic and medieval hermeneutics, with all

---

[1]K. Eschweiler, Die zwei Wege der neueren Theologie (Augsburg, 1926).

its philosophical and doctrinal implications further evaluated in modern hermeneutical theory. This is the point of view of the modern Roman pontiffs as the above analysis of their Biblical encyclicals has documented.

A summary of Catholic opinions concerning the hermeneutical developments in each of the three major periods (patristic, medieval, modern) will further establish the basis and nature of the "ecumenical" implications of modern Catholic Biblical hermeneutics.

The historical and theological presuppositions of all later development of Biblical exegesis are the hermeneutical principles that are evident in Scripture itself: that God is the author of Scripture; that Scripture has its meaning, or meanings (senses), through the process of inspiration; and that, due to the variable nature of the relationship of God and hagiographer in the act of inspiration, Scripture has both a literal and a spiritual or typical sense. Whether the Biblical authors were always conscious of the fact that the literal meaning of their compositions also contained a typological meaning or a "fuller" sense, is a matter of current debate.[1] Against Daniélou's attempt of taking all spiritual meanings of the Old and New Testaments to be "christological" in the broadest sense, including sacramental, liturgical, ecclesiological connotations,[2] his

---

[1]Brown, op. cit., p. 13 et passim; Cerfaux, "Simple réflexions à propos de l'exégèse apostolique," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, XXV (1949), 565-76.

[2]Daniélou, op. cit.; idem, "The Fathers and the Scriptures," The Eastern Churches Quarterly, X (1953), 265-73; idem, "Les divers sens de l'Écriture dans la tradition chrétienne primitive," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanensis, XXIV (1948), 119-26.

critics maintain that such a concept of the spiritual meaning of Scripture is still too narrow--that the unity of the two Testaments is more than "christological."[1] As in the hermeneutical debate of contemporary ecumenical Protestantism, the issue is not whether to acknowledge a doctrinal unity over against the historical, literary unity (or diversity) of the Bible. The question is over the kind of doctrinal, dogmatical unity proposed.[2]

Hermeneutical studies during the first four centuries are promoted in the exegetical schools;[3] from the fifth century into the Middle Ages, till the rise of the European universities, the monasteries provide, and thereby transform, the climate of Patristic hermeneutics. While during the first period hermeneutics is born of the integration of the Church's theological tradition with the study of the Classical "liberal arts,"[4] the second period has hermeneutics cultivated in the spiritual, ascetic air of the monastery rather than the intellectual, scientific atmosphere of the school.[5] A new spiritual interpretation that goes beyond Alexandrian allegorism and Antiochian literalism emerges in the

---

[1]Brown, op. cit.; A. Jones, "Reflections on a recent dispute," Scripture, VIII (1956), 21-22. Cf. above, p. 109.

[2]See above, p. 54 f.; p. 72 f.; p. 76 f. (points 3 and 4).

[3]See above, p. 152, n. 5-8; cf. J. Guillet, "Les exégèses d'Alexandrie et Antioche. Conflit ou malentendu?" Recherches de science religieuse, XXXIV (1947), 257-302.

[4]Grammar, Dialectic, Rhetoric, and others. Cf. P. de Labriolle, La reaction païenne (Paris, 1929), p. 214 et passim.

[5]D. Gorce, Lectio Divina (Paris, 1925); A. Mundó, "Bibliotheca, Bible et lecture du Carême d'apres S. Benoit," Revue Benedictine, LX (1950), 65-94; A. Vaccari, "La Bibbia nell' ambiente di S. Benedetto," Biblica, XXIX (1948), 321-44. Cf. B. Smalley, The study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (1952), p. 27 f.

theological work of the fathers of organized communal monasticism--the Cappadocian Fathers.[1] Progress and perfection in spiritual, contemplative, ascetic life became hermeneutical prerequisites and remained an integral part of medieval and modern Catholic hermeneutics.[2]

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century a great change in the evaluation of medieval Biblical hermeneutics began to take place. Catholic scholars like Martin and Denifle in the late nineteenth, Morin and Wilmart in the early twentieth century paved the way for an historically more adequate, positive interpretation of the merits of medieval Biblical scholarship.[3] A first attempt of summing up the results of this new historical and theological evaluation of medieval Biblical hermeneutics was recently made by the Dominican scholar Father Spicq.[4] The traditional notion of the "Dark Ages" shared by Protestant and Catholic theologians alike, though still prevailing, must certainly be abandoned. It has been shown in numerous works,[5] how all of medieval theology was saturated with Biblical studies; how medie-

---

[1]Y. Courtonne, St. Basil et l'hellénisme (Paris, 1934); S. Giet, Basile de Césarée (Paris, 1950); I. A. Zahm, "St. Gregory of Nyssa," American Ecclesiastical Review, X (1894), 187-94.

[2]See above, p. 93 (quotation from E.B., No. 111), p. 109 (quotation from E.B., No. 468), and p. 135.

[3]Of great help also was the publication of indexes to Migne's edition of Patristic and Medieval Latin and Greek literature. F. Cavallera, Migne Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca. Indices digessit (Paris, 1912); Th. Hopfner, Migne Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Graeca. Index locupletissimus (Paris, 1928 ff.).

[4]Op. cit., (p. 152, n. 3); cf. B. Smalley, The study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1952).

[5]See bibliographies in Spicq's and Smalley's works.

val theological controversies were basically over hermeneutical issues, the Protestant view being only one among many.[1] Neither historically nor theologically is there any basis to the claim that the rise of Protestant Biblical hermeneutics in the sixteenth century was like post tenebrae lux.

Rules of interpretation were set up in medieval times, as in Patristic theology, in accordance with the diverse ideas people had about the nature of the Bible. Holy Scripture was many things to many different people--to the theologian, monk, church administrator or representative of the hierarchy, the scientist of the humanities and natural sciences, artist, philosopher, teacher, and preacher. But all had one thing in common during the Middle Ages--the study of Scripture, the textbook of studies in the schools of early medieval reform-monasticism, of the clerical communities connected with the cathedrals, the new schools of the flourishing mendicant orders, the humanistic universities and liberal arts colleges. The variety of hermeneutical theories in the historical development of patristic and medieval Biblical hermeneutics, besides due to competing doctrinal and hermeneutical traditions,[2] is lately but tentatively held to be due also to the influence of political, economic, and social factors.[3]

---

[1]Brown, op. cit., pp. 55-62; F. Falk, Die Bibel am Ausgang des Mittelalters (Cologne, 1905); A. Vaccari, "La lettura della Bibbia alle vigilia della riforma protestante," La Civiltà Cattolica, III (1933), 325 ff.

[2]The Latin, Western tradition versus the Greek, Eastern Orthodox; or the continuing rivalry between Alexandrian and Antiochian methodologies; between Classical learning and monastic spiritual perfection.

[3]See note by Brown, op. cit., p. 56. Cf. Smalley, op. cit., p. xiii f.

The influence of Rabbinical hermeneutics is fully recognized.[1]

The two main contributions to Biblical hermeneutics made by medieval exegetes are (1) the introduction of the analytical method into Biblical studies through the work of the Postillators;[2] (2) the growing recognition of the necessity of historical, critical studies of the literal meaning of the Biblical text and its manuscript tradition.[3] The literal meaning came to be understood as the basis of all spiritual, theological meanings.[4] This development was the result of influences partly from Jewish hermeneutics, partly from the renaissance of Classical learning in Western Europe;[5] and it was the reflection of the new constructive approach in theology, calling for "history" as the basis of "faith," for natura as the basis of gratia.[6]

The traditionally more familiar aspects of medieval Bib-

---

[1]See above, p. 155, n. 2; Spicq, op. cit., pp. 90, 226, et passim.

[2]Vaccari, "S. Tommaso e Lutero" (op. cit., p. 41 ff.); cf. Smalley, op. cit., pp. 264-81; Spicq, op. cit., p. 215 f. et passim.

[3]Spicq, op. cit., p. 49 f., pp. 84 ff. et passim, p. 186 f. on R. Bacon.

[4]H. de Lubac, "Sur un vieux distique: la doctrine du quadruple sens," Mélanges offerts au R. P. Ferdinand Cavallera (Toulouse, 1948), pp. 347-66.

[5]G. Paré, A. Brunet, and P. Tremblay, La renaissance du XIIe siècle, les écoles et l'enseignement (Paris, Ottawa, 1933); A. Kleinhaus, "Der Studiengang der Professoren der heiligen Schrift im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert," Biblica, XIV (1933), 381-99.

[6]J. de Ghellinck, Le mouvement théologique au XIIe siècle (Bruges, 1948); M.-D. Chenu, "Grammaire et théologie au XIIe et XIIIe siècles," Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge (Paris, 1936); idem, La théologie comme science au XIIIe siècle (2d ed.; Paris, 1943); H. Pope, "Sacra Pagina in the fourteenth century," American Ecclesiastical Review, LXIV (1921), pp. 503 ff.

lical hermeneutics, the sometimes rather excessive allegorizations,[1] appear to be characteristic of the times before A.D. 1000 and after 1300 when the Church held, either not yet or no longer, "a safe monopoly of learning" (Smalley). Against the two extremes of liberal, rationalistic humanism and mystic, irrational or anti-rational spiritualism, the two exponents of the emancipation of "religion" and "science" from the institutional church,[2] and the resulting orthodox or heretical reform-movements,[3] the Catholic Church fought a losing battle to maintain its hermeneutical program by advocating effective but limited local reform programs,[4] and by denouncing mysticism as vigorously as rationalism,[5] which essentially are the same measures taken by the modern Roman pontiffs for the same reasons. Spicq will have us believe that the eventual confusion and final crisis in Catholic Biblical hermeneutics, with the rise of the Protestant Reformation, was mainly due to the fatal mix-up of two cardinal hermeneutical theories--the nature of Biblical revelation and inspiration. It is significant that this mishap is not blamed on some heretic, but is identified as an inner-Catholic

---

[1]M.-D. Chenu, "Les deux âges de l'allégorisme scripturaire au moyen âge," Revue de la theologie ancienne et medievale, XVIII (1951), 19-28.

[2]Cf. G. de Lagarde, Naissance de l'esprit laique au decline du moyen âge, 6 vols. (Vienna, 1934--).

[3]Waldensians, Wycliffites, Hussites, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans--all had two features in common: the religious emancipation of the laity, and some hermeneutical program of their own.

[4]M.-C. Chenu, "L'humanisme et réforme au Collège Saint-Jacques de Paris," Archiv d'histoire dominicaine, I (1946), 130-54.

[5]Spicq, op. cit., pp. 361-64; see above, p. 155, n. 1 on Gerson.

crisis similar in nature to the Modernist controversy or that over the pamphlet of 1941 (above, p. 118 f.).

The modern period is usually dated as opening with the restatement of the basic Catholic principles of Biblical hermeneutics at the Ecumenical Council of Trent in 1546,[1] when the nature and function of Biblical hermeneutics for the "Ecumenical" Church and its theology were brought into focus. In Sessio IV it was decreed that Scripture, as one channel of the depositum fidei beside the Tradition of the Church, is as much entrusted to the Church for interpretation as preaching and theology are entrusted to the Church, in order that the salutaris veritas et morum disciplina, preserved in Scripture and Tradition, may be made known (E.B., No. 57). In Sessio V and its decree concerning the lectio Sacrae Scripturae et liberalium artium (E.B., Nos. 65-72) some influence of humanism, particularly through Jerome Seripando, one of the members of the Council, is noted to have been brought to bear upon Catholic Biblical hermeneutics.[2]

The hermeneutical principles of Protestantism, especially those of Luther, appear to modern Catholic scholars[3] to be sub-

---

[1]Vaccari, "Esegesi ed esegeti al Concilio di Trento," Biblica, XXVII (1946), 320-37; E. Oritigues, "Ecritures et traditions apostoliques au Concile de Trente," Recherches de science religieuse, Vol. XXXVI (1949).

[2]G. Toffanin, L'umanesimo al concilio di Trento (Bologna, 1955); M. Bendiscioli, "Humanismus und Katholizismus," Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift, I (1950), 53; see above, p. 124, n. 1; p. 152, n. 2; p. 162, n. 5.

[3]H. de Lubac, Histoire et Esprit, pp. 374 ff. and 438-41 et passim; Vaccari, op. cit. (see above, p. 153, n. 4, and p. 161, n. 1); Pius X, Encyclical Pascendi (E.B., No. 267); E. Mangenot and J. Rivière, "Interprétation de l'Ecriture," Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, VII (1923), 2293 f., 2331-40; Brown, op. cit., pp. 63-67.

stituting the infallibility of the book for the infallibility of the Church. It is claimed that in Protestant Biblical hermeneutics the literal and spiritual or theological exegesis are either identified or divorced from each other. In either case, the result is spiritualism, "fideism," or rationalism. Abhorrent as this division is "to the whole (!) of Catholic hermeneutical tradition," some scholars fear that the renaissance of Patristic hermeneutics in modern Catholicism[1] does not altogether avoid the danger of imposing upon modern Catholic hermeneutics "the same spirit" of division.[2] In comparison with medieval and the best of contemporary Catholic hermeneutics, Luther's hermeneutics was not new as far as its hermeneutical structure is concerned; new was only the ordine sentimentale e dommatico in which he saw Scripture as the sole hermeneutical norm at the expense or exclusion of Tradition,[3] the actualisation de l'apostolat, and the "actualization of revelation."[4]

The whole development of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics between the Council of Trent and the Vatican Council of 1870 can be summarized in a few points. The Enchiridion Biblicum, a collection of Catholic documents concerning Biblical interpretation, authorized by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, lists only one minor excerpt from a papal decree, beside the Syllabus of Pius IX

---

[1]Notably in the reappraisal of Origen's hermeneutics in the works of H. de Lubac.

[2]J. L. McKenzie, in Theological Studies, XII (1951), 380.

[3]Vaccari, "S. Tommaso e Lutero," p. 45.

[4]Daniélou, "Réponse à Oscar Cullmann," Dieu Vivant, XXIV (1953), 107-116.

of 1864, as representative of this period (E.B., No. 74). Analogous to the theological developments in Protestantism, though under different premises, post-Tridentine Catholicism developed in three sometimes separate, sometimes interrelated ways, in full accordance with the medieval scholastic inheritance--orthodoxy, pietism or spiritualism, and rationalism. The controversies over Catholic Biblical interpretation during this period, resounding in the three Biblical encyclicals of the modern popes, had all but one basic issue--how to integrate the three hermeneutical traditions without losing the merits of any of the three, particularly the merits of the newly-emancipated rational, scientific hermeneutical approach to Scripture.

In academic Catholic theology, this period is marked by the recognition of theologia positiva (exegetical and historical theology) as a separate theological discipline beside theologia scholastica or speculativa and theologia moralia.[1] With this recognition came also the introduction of Biblical hermeneutics, a part of Biblical Introduction, as a separate, distinctive element in the academic theological curriculum.[2] The great number of books on Biblical hermeneutics or hermeneutical issues, published during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,[3] is a

---

[1]J. Turmel, Histoire de la théologie positive depuis l'origine jusqu'au Concile de Trent (Paris, 1904); idem, Histoire de la théologie positive de Concile de Trente au Concile du Vatican (Paris, 1906).

[2]Allgeier, op. cit.

[3]See D. Gla, Systematisch geordnetes Repertorium der katholisch-theologischen Literatur welche in Deutschland, Oesterreich und der Schweiz seit 1700 erschienen ist (2 vols.; Paderborn, n.d.), Vol. I, pp. 35 ff., Vol. II, pp. 45 ff. See also biography in op. cit. (above, p. 86, n. 1).

witness to the liveliness of the hermeneutical debate in this period matching that in contemporary Protestantism. The religious orders, old and new,[1] had a major share in this debate.

But the controversy with what Catholics commonly call the rationalism of Protestant Biblical hermeneutics proved to be not very favorable to the development and integration of rational, scientific Biblical hermeneutics in modern Catholic theology. This is best illustrated by what happened to the work of the oratorian Richard Simon (1638-1712). He was condemned "with very striking unanimity" by the Jansenists, the Jesuits, and the Calvinists of his time, charged with the "heresy" of introducing historical criticism as the basis of Catholic Biblical interpretation. But, as P. Nober, a leading theologian connected with the Biblical Institute and the Biblical Commission, observed recently, there is a growing rehabilitation of Richard Simon since about 1900 when Catholic theologians began to recognize that he and the modern popes in their Biblical encyclicals "spoke the same language"--an "unshakable adherence to the dogma of inspiration, to the Catholic concept of Tradition, combined with a great appreciation for literary forms."[2] How sensitive Catholic theologians were, and in part still are, to an overemphasis on rational hermeneutical criteria is best shown by the sharp reactions against

---

[1]Besides the literature mentioned above, p. 154, n. 6, see ibid., III (1903), 1403-421, on the contributions of the Jesuits.

[2]From review in Biblica, XXXVIII (1957), 80; 83; 84, note.

"rationalism" in Biblical studies during the pontificate of Pius IX.[1]

It is equally important to notice the rejection of any overemphasis on spiritual exegesis. The modern evaluations of the exegesis of the Jansenist Blaise Pascal (1623-62) is a case in point; some charge negligence of the literal sense,[2] while others praise the resemblance to Patristic hermeneutics.[3] This ambiguous attitude to both the rational, scientific and the spiritual, devotional, dogmatical approach to Scripture is due to the complexity of disparate elements in the hermeneutical tradition of Catholic theology. And not until the decrees in the recent Biblical encyclicals of Leo XIII, Benedict XV, and Pius XII was there any one particular, clearly-defined orthodox hermeneutical program and methodology. Witness the temporary confusion in the early nineteenth century when Catholic Bible societies, in more than deliberate naïveté, cooperated with Protestant Bible societies,[4] which met, of course, with repeated protests from the Curia (Pius VII in 1817, Leo XII in 1824). Witness also the

---

[1]Encyclical Qui pluribus of November 9, 1846, and his Syllabus of 1864 (see E.B., No. 75).

[2]A. M. Dubarle, "Pascal et l'interprétation de l'Ecriture," Revue des sciences philosophiques et theologiques (1941-42), pp. 346-79; J. Steinmann, "Entretien de Pascal et du Père Richard Simon sur le sens de l'Ecriture," La Vie Intellectuelle (March, 1949).

[3]H. de Lubac, Histoire et Esprit, p. 245; pp. 423 ff.

[4]J. Freeland, "A Catholic Bible society: Protestant efforts and a Catholic attempt," American Ecclesiastical Review, XXXVII (1907), 345-57.

ambiguous appraisal of the hermeneutical system of Cardinal Newman.[1]

In the following outline of the system of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics as found in modern Catholic literature the results of the historical analysis, presented in this and the preceding chapters, will be reflected once again, but this time in the light of the ultimate objective of this study--the evaluation of the significance of Biblical hermeneutics and its "ecumenical" implications for modern Catholicism.

---

[1]Brown, op. cit., p. 65; J. Seynaeve, Cardinal Newman's doctrine of Scripture (Louvain, 1953); cf. Daniélou's review in Dieu Vivant (1954), p. 155.

CHAPTER VII

THE SYSTEM OF CATHOLIC BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

The concept of Biblical hermeneutics in modern Catholic theology, and the variety of individual hermeneutical principles and theories, as reflected in the historical development of hermeneutics in modern times (Chapter V) and in the reappraisal of the history of hermeneutics since Biblical times (Chapter VI), they are embodied in an elaborate system of Biblical hermeneutics, taught in theological seminaries and presented in hermeneutical textbooks and summary articles in encyclopedias.[1] This system of Biblical hermeneutics is known by three technical terms, each denoting one particular aspect of the problem and the task of Biblical hermeneutics: (1) noematics, or the theoretical concerns over the nature and meaning of Holy Scripture; (2) heuristics, or the methodology of interpretation; (3) proforistics, or the study of the forms and methods of presenting the meaning of Scripture. The term "hermeneutics" covers all three areas. Any attempt of evaluating the significance of Biblical hermeneutics for modern Catholicism must take into account the special

---

[1] On bibliographies of older textbooks see references above, p. 86, n. 1-2; p. 115, n. 1-2; p. 148, n. 1; more recent outlines: A. Fernández, Hermeneutica in Institutiones Biblicae, (Rome, 1925), Vol. I; E. Mangenot and J. Rivière, "Interprétation de l'Ecriture," Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, VII (1923), 2290-343; P. Cruveilhier, "Herméneutique sacrée," D.B.S., III (1938), 1482-524; A. Metzinger and A. Penna, "Interpretazione Biblica," Enciclopedia Cattolica, VII (1951), 100-108.

value that each of the three aspects of hermeneutics has for the concept of hermeneutics as a whole.

Traditionally, the systematic presentation of Biblical hermeneutics was either a part or the very substance of what is known as "Introduction to the Bible." Hermeneutik war die älteste Form der Einleitung.[1] The theological and scientific occupation with the setting up of rules of interpretation and applying them is characterized in all the literature mentioned above as a science, or as an art, or as both. What logic is for philosophy, Biblical hermeneutics is for exegesis and theology as a whole--a safety measure to prevent errors.[2] The two main causes of error are the obscurities Scripture has in common with other literary historical records, and the peculiarity of its character in terms of the unity of the two Testaments, the double authorship of God and hagiographer or its status of inspiration and inerrancy. The scope of Biblical hermeneutics is to provide theology with the right means of discovering and expressing the full meaning and true nature of the verba Dei, similar to the concern in Christology over the Verbum Dei. Protestants and Catholics differ "not on some single point of exegesis, nor on one or two dogmas however important, but on the very approach to the Word of God."[3]

But Scripture and Word of God are not identical; Scripture is only "one expression" of the Word of God,[4] as the his-

---

[1]Allgeier, op. cit., p. 5.

[2]Kortleitner, op. cit., p. 1.

[3]Jones, op. cit., p. 16.

[4]Ibid., p. 18.

torical Jesus and the Incarnation are but "one expression" of the Logos besides others (the preexistent, the eschatological logos, etc.). Scripture is one of the revelationis fontes.[1] The task of constructing and reconstructing hermeneutical principles for Biblical interpretation is part of the comprehensive, perennial task of setting up a constructive, scientific theology to serve both the Church and the "world";[2] its primary motive is that of protecting the "deposit of faith" as expressed in Scripture from misinterpretations and misrepresentations, and of securing the fullest possible, most complete and most adequate understanding of the meaning of Scripture. In executing this necessary task of a Catholic Biblical and theological hermeneutics, Catholic theologians are to employ all the tools provided both by the Canon of Scripture and by the traditional and contemporary teaching of the Church concerning dogma, liturgy, spiritual life, and ethics.[3] Each of the three above-mentioned aspects of Biblical hermeneutics calls for a special analysis, because the relevance of hermeneutics for modern Catholicism is reflected by each in a characteristic way.

The cornerstone in the Catholic system of Biblical hermeneutics that gives both structure and stability to the whole system is called noematics, the theoretical study of what con-

---

[1]Leo XIII Encyclical Providentissimus Deus (see above, p. 94); cf. H. Denzinger and C. Rahner, Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum (Freiburg: Herder, 1957), see references in Index, p. 9 f.

[2]See above, p. 88, p. 91 f. (point 4); p. 94; cf. Cruveilhier, op. cit., p. 1487 f.

[3]Schildenberger, op. cit. (above, p. 148, n. 1), pp. 1-14.

stitutes the meaning, signification, or intention of words, phrases, literary forms, books, and collection of books used or set up by the author of Scripture. The question of whom the auctor of Scripture is constitutes the hermeneutical problem of the auctoritas of Scripture, the twin problem of the authorship and authority of Scripture and its relevance for theology.

Traditionally, it was understood that the auctor primarius[1] was God or the Spirit. Thus, the meaning of Scripture, it is claimed in noematics, is the result not only of the communication of thoughts, ideas, intentions of or rather from God Himself, but also of the self-communication of God Himself, His power, life, wisdom, grace, salvation, etc.[2] But not until recently, in the three Bible encyclicals of Leo XIII, Benedict XV, and Pius XII, has it equally been emphasized that Scripture has also auctores secundarii, the amanuenses, redactores, traditiones fontesque adhibiti.[3] Though God is the principal author of Scripture, and His awareness and intentions are always the criteria for the meaning and authority of Scripture, there can be no text whose origin can be said to be "in God alone."[4] This is the application of the christological category of God's condescension

---

[1]See references in Index rerum of E.B., p. 274, under Sacrae Scripturae auctor primarius; for collection of Patristic data, see M. J. Rouët de Journel, Enchiridion Patristicum (Freiburg, 1956), index theologicus, p. 761 f.

[2]I. de la Potterie, "L'efficacité de la Parole de Dieu," Lumen Vitae, X (1955), 61.

[3]See references in E.B., Index rerum.

[4]Brown, op. cit., p. 131.

to Biblical hermeneutics as already noted above.[1] As Christ during His earthly life at no time was purely human or purely divine but always had the perfect communicatio idiomatum of the human and divine, so also the meaning of Scripture at no one place in the accepted Canon can be distinguished according to purely divine versus purely human (i.e., literary, historical) elements.

God's intention is called revelation; the act of special grace provided by God for Man to understand and interpret this revelation is called inspiration.[2] The confusion of these two hermeneutical terms within the Catholic tradition itself both medieval[3] and modern[4] is the major cause of controversies in the field of Biblical hermeneutics. The essence of inspiration is not to be found in the doctrine that the Bible contains revelation over against that it is revelation;[5] it is rather the concept of the "instrumentality,"[6] i.e., the specific and historically unique cooperation between God and the Biblical writers which is qualitatively distinguished, but not different, from

---

[1]Relevant passage from Divino Afflante Spiritu above, p. 130.

[2]On the various decrees on revelation and inspiration, see references in Index rerum of E.B., pp. 270, 274; and Rouët de Journel, op. cit., p. 761 f.

[3]See above, p. 163, note by Spicq.

[4]G. Courtade, "Inspiration et Inerrance," D.B.S., IV (1949), 482-559.

[5]On this commonplace Protestant distinction see editorial "Incarnation and inspiration," Interpretation, X (1956), 43-44.

[6]On instrumentalitas see E.B., Nos. 125-26, 448 (referred to above, pp. 95 and 108).

the concept of instrumentality relevant for the relationship of "nature" and "grace" or the concept of the physical causality of the sacraments.[1] To understand this distinction is all-important because it is the stronghold of the Catholic concept of Biblical hermeneutics. This is evident in the way in which all the modern Roman pontiffs have used the issue of inspiration and of the dogmatical inerrancy of Scripture[2] as the criterion to denounce Modernism, Rationalism, and reactionary dogmatism in the tradition of Catholic and non-Catholic theology.[3]

If, then, according to Catholic noematics, God and hagiographer cooperate in producing Scripture, what possible meanings or senses can a Biblical phrase have, and what necessary modifications are human insight and language subject to as the result of inspiration and divine auctoritas? These questions are debated at great length and with great intensity in recent years. The philosophical,[4] exegetical,[5] dogmatical,[6] or devotional[7] orientation of the contributors to the debate determined its character. The opinion of Daniélou, purportedly based on Biblical and

---

[1]K. Smyth, "The inspiration of Scriptures," Scripture, VI (1954), 67-75.

[2]On "inerrancy" as "effect of inspiration," see references in Index rerum of E.B., p. 270.

[3]See above, p. 108, p. 123, p. 129 f.

[4]B. Lonergan (S.J.), Insight. A study of human understanding (New York, 1956).

[5]Coppens, op. cit.; Brown, op. cit.

[6]Schildenberger, op. cit.; G. Auzou, La Parole de Dieu (1956).

[7]L. Bouyer, "Liturgie et exégèse spirituelle," La Maison Dieu, VII (1946); and numerous articles by C. Charlier.

Patristic data, that all classifications of the meanings or senses of Scripture are "artificial"[1] and are basically only divers aspects du Christ d'après les circonstances, has been accepted only with reservation or modification. The "mystery of faith" and Catholic doctrina are generally thought of in more comprehensive terms.[2]

The basis of all meaning is the literal sense, in much the same way that the historical, incarnate Jesus is the presupposition of soteriology, ecclesiology, eschatology, etc. Why and how to uphold the validity and priority of the literal sense is the cardinal problem in modern Catholic hermeneutics. The debate over the sensus plenior is only one aspect of the problem. The literal meaning comprises everything the two authors of Scripture, God and the hagiographer, "directly and proximately intended and which the words directly convey, either properly or metaphorically."[3] The literal and historical meaning of any part of Scripture must be determined not only by means of the text, context and parallel passages, but also in accordance with the interpretation of the Fathers, the analogy of faith, and, if necessary, the decisions of the Church.[4]

---

[1]"Les divers sens de l'Ecriture dans la tradition chrétienne primitive," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanenses, XXIV (1948), 126. See above, p. 158 f.

[2]H. de Lubac, op. cit. (above, p. 162, n. 4), p. 359 et passim.

[3]Brown, op. cit., p. 4; cf. Coppens, Les harmonies, pp. 104-119.

[4]See above, p. 91 (ad E.B., No. 107), p. 93 (ad E.B., No. 109), pp. 126-27 (ad E.B., No. 551); cf. A. Bea, "L'Enciclica Humani Generis e gli studi biblici," La Civiltà Cattolica, CI (1950), 425-27.

There are two dangers to be avoided (some Catholics are counted to be almost; most non-Catholics are already, victims): on the one hand, the danger of identifying grammatical analysis with meaning, or the danger of confusing "signification with sense";[1] on the other hand the danger of separating the two. That means that for Catholic Biblical hermeneutics scientific, rational inquiry is, though absolutely necessary, still not the only or ultimate criterion for interpretation. This corresponds to the traditional notion of the mutua inter revelationem et rationem relatio and to the rationis vires, officia, limites.[2]

Rational, scientific Biblical hermeneutics is, however, indispensable for the time being, even though the ultimate goal of all human pursuit, including scientific and theological inquiry, is held to be the beatific vision,[3] or the abiding value and necessity of faith, hope, and love, even when "the perfect" has come and the "seeing face to face" will have replaced the "looking in a glass darkly" (I Cor. 13). This emphasis on the indispensable normativity of the rightly integrated science with the dogma of the Catholic Church is very significant. It appears to correspond to another notion in orthodox Christology, according to which the Second Person of the Trinity and the eschatological Judge will eternally be identical with the incarnate Logos, and be forever identifiable only as the historical Crucifixus.

---

[1]Brown, op. cit., p. 5.

[2]See Denzinger-Rahner, Enchiridion Symbolorum, Index systematicus, p. (8) f.

[3]Jones, op. cit., p. 8.

The derivation of spiritual and dogmatical meanings from the basic literal meaning of Scripture, and the detection of the Spirit in the Letter, of Faith in History, are beyond the scope of scientific, rational hermeneutics; yet science, in serving the Church by evaluating all the data pertaining to the Letter and History,[1] can facilitate the spiritual interpretation, the prerogative and task of the Church. It seems inconsistent that the modern popes do not outrightly condemn the unscientific allegorizations and hermeneutical accommodations, but rather tolerate them[2] as welcome means that are justified by the ends they serve--the use of Scripture in theology, in the liturgy, and for devotional practices. But this peculiar feature appears to be born of the openly-acknowledged indebtedness of Catholic theology to Patristic and Medieval monasticism or mysticism. It is counted to the credit of Thomas Aquinas, and not to Augustine, Jerome, or other pretenders to hermeneutical honors, that this monastic, spiritual heritage was harmoniously integrated with the Classical learning and the tradition of the Liberal Arts in Patristic and Medieval theology, partly mediated or revived by Rabbinical Judaism.[3]

The second great aspect of Catholic Biblical hermeneutics is the problem of heuristics, the exegetical methodology proper. The same basic problem dominating in noematics appears here in the form of the debate on how rational, scientific heuristics

---

[1]See above, pp. 129-31 (ad E.B., Nos. 555-61).

[2]See above, p. 128, Pius XII recognizing the usum externum of Scripture.

[3]See above, p. 152, n. 1-2; p. 153, n. 2-4; p. 154, n. 1-7; p. 155, n. 1-2.

(heuristica rationalis) is to be related, or rather to be interrelated, with theological heuristics (heuristica catholica).

By rational heuristics is understood the outlining of the means and methods of searching for the meaning of Scripture provided by rational sciences and the erudition of heterodox exegetes.[1] For some[2] rational hermeneutics is a necessary evil, bringing with it "disadvantages and shallower outlook, because of so much stress upon appearances." The same ones deplore the fact that "the development in historical sciences has brought a preoccupation with literal contexts," etc., resulting in "difficulties in our presentation of theology."[3] But others see in rational heuristics la seule voie à suivre pour résoudre les difficultés que l'on fait d'ordinaire à l'historicité de la Bible.[4]

Rational heuristics is presented in two parts according to the internal and external criteria of Scripture. Internal criteria are the Biblical languages,[5] text and manuscript ver-

---

[1]Cruveilhier, op. cit., p. 1504.

[2]Like T. Worden, op. cit., p. 7 et passim.

[3]Ibid.

[4]F. M. Braun, Les études bibliques (Fribourg, 1946), p. 25.

[5]Cruveilhier, op. cit., p. 1489 f.; Schildenberger, op. cit., pp. 106-171; C. Lattey, "The languages of Holy Writ," Clergy Review, VI (1933), 32-45; on the study of the Biblical languages in the Middle Ages, see above, p. 156 (ad E.B., Nos. 41-43), pp. 124-25 (ad E.B., No. 547), cf. Spicq, op. cit., p. 178f.; see articles in D.B.S., Vol. III (1938) on Hebraique and Grec Biblique; for the ever-increasing amount of Roman Catholic works on grammars, lexicons, etc., see annual Elenchus bibliographicus in Biblica.

sions,[1] and the literary genres.[2] The study of the latter has become in recent years tout à coup le problème scripturaire par excellence.[3] The study of the literary genres[4] began to open up an hitherto-unknown understanding of the cultural and religious traditions the Biblical hagiographers had used or were subject to, and it revealed some of the historical, psychological and social presuppositions of the Biblical writers at the time of inspiration. And these traditions and presuppositions are called the external criteria the study of which has been greatly emphasized in modern Catholic Biblical hermeneutics.[5]

While in "rational heuristics" rules are set up to establish the meaning of Scripture conditioned by the outer and inner circumstances and presuppositions of the hagiographer, in "theological heuristics" attention is focused on the other aspect of Scripture that was firmly established in noematics (see above,

---

[1]L. Vaganay, Initiation à la critique textuelle néotestamentaire (Paris, 1934); H. Vogels, Handbuch der Textkritik (Bonn, 1955); Courtade, op. cit., p. 382 f.; cf. above, pp. 124 ff. (ad E.B., Nos. 547-49).

[2]Schildenberger, op. cit., pp. 172-391; A. Robert, "Littéraires Genres," D.B.S., fasc. XXV (1952), 405-421; E. Dhorme, La Poésie Biblique (Paris, 1931); E. Florit, Il metodo della "Storia delle Forme" (Rome, 1935); see above, p. 108 (ad E.B., Nos. 461-62) and p. 129 (ad E.B., Nos. 558 and 560).

[3]Robert, op. cit., p. 406.

[4]Robert, op. cit., pp. 417-20, calls attention to the following relevant articles in D.B.S.: Babylone et la Bible, Formgeschichte, Historique (genre), Loi Israélite, Midrash, Papias, Poésie Biblique, Prophetique (genre), Religionsgeschichte, Sapietiel (genre), Milieu Biblique.

[5]Cruveilhier, op. cit., p. 1492; K. Prümm, Religionsgeschichtliches Handbuch für den Raum der altchristlichen Umwelt (Freiburg, 1943); cf. Revue Biblique, publication of the École Biblique, and the recent Catholic contributions to the interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

pp. 173 ff.) the meaning that God or the Spirit, as primary author of Scripture, had intended. Since the Church is held to be the place where the Spirit and the Faith have been deposited,[1] the only authentic agent for a spiritual, faithful, "objective" interpretation of the full meaning of Scripture is the Church. Because through and in the act of inspiration the literal meaning has become inextricably interwoven with the spiritual meaning, the so-called "plain," literal meaning which is in charge of rational heuristics can reveal its full, objective meaning only through "theological heuristics." This hermeneutical discipline proposes to evaluate the theological, spiritual, liturgical meaning of Scripture by employing any one, or all, of the following five criteria: (1) the hermeneutical decrees of the Oecumenical councils, especially of Trent[2] and of the Vatican Council of 1870;[3] (2) the exegetical principles decreed by other councils and by papal pronouncements;[4] (3) the decrees of the Pontifical Biblical Commission;[5] (4) the hermeneutical principles

---

[1]Cruveilhier, op. cit., p. 1513.

[2]See above, p. 84; p. 125 f.; p. 157; p. 164.

[3]See above, p. 84, n. 1; cf. Index rerum in E.B., p. 267, for the reaffirmation of the Trent and Vatican decrees in the encyclicals of the modern popes.

[4]See above, p. 89 (ad E.B., Nos. 90-99), p. 94 (ad E.B., No. 116); all the relevant decrees are collected in Enchiridion Biblicum, Denzinger's Enchiridion Symbolorum, and Rouët de Journel's Enchiridion Patristicum.

[5]Cruveilhier, op. cit., pp. 1519-24; L. Pirot, "Commission Biblique," D.B.S., II (1934), 103-113; E. F. Siegman, "The decrees of the Pontifical Biblical Commission," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XVIII (1956), 23-29; see also above, 97-98 (ad E.B., Nos. 139-43).

of the Church Fathers;[1] and (5) the hermeneutical norm of the "analogy of faith."[2]

Through "theological heuristics" the interpretation is to be made and kept subject to the one criterion to which also the theology and tradition of the Church are subject--"the living Gospel, the living Word which is the life-principle of the Christian and Apostolic Society." Because Scripture and Tradition are held to be "the two forms of expression[3] in which the one Word of God makes itself heard," the meaning of Scripture and of Tradition, and the criteria of discovering the meaning, must therefore be the same. Whether or not any one of the two may at points or at times be insufficient or even silent while the other is not, is an open argument among Catholic theologians.[4] Pius XII seems to imply[5] that the Bible is so rich in meaning that all the richness of the doctrinal and liturgical tradition of the Church can be taken as the unfolding of the content of Scripture. The traditional and present magisterium of the Church that defines the content of both Scripture and Tradition by establishing and in-

---

[1]See above, pp. 91, 93 (E.B., Nos. 110-11), p. 108 (E.B., No. 453).

[2]See above, pp. 91-93 (E.B., No. 109), p. 126 (E.B., No. 551).

[3]Note the "pariter" in quotation on p. 94 (E.B., No. 114).

[4]O. Müller, "Zum Begriff der Tradition in der Theologie der letzten hundert Jahre," Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift, IV (1953), 165: "der Begriff der Tradition ist in der Theologie bisher noch nicht klar und auch die Kirche selbst hat ihn noch nicht fest umrissen und autoritativ geklärt." G. Dejaifve, "Bible, Tradition, Magistère dans la thélogie catholique," Nouvelle Revue Théologique, LXXVIII (1956), 135-51.

[5]See above, p. 128 (ad E.B., No. 553).

terpreting both the Canon of Scripture and the dogma does not add to the content of the writings, but is concerned "with clarifying, synthesizing, applying that content."[1]

Against the common Protestant misunderstanding that makes out Catholic Biblical hermeneutics as dependent on two sources of revelation, it is claimed in Catholic theological heuristics that Scripture and the Apostolic tradition of the Church are one organic, homogeneous development of the Verbum Dei Incarnatum. Its earliest manifestations are seen in the doctrinal and liturgical elements that are part of the Canonical Biblical kerygma. Modern Catholic theologians have jumped to all sorts of conclusions over the newly but widely recognized fact that modern Continental Protestantism (not to speak of the Anglican and Eastern Orthodox churches)[2] acknowledges some kind of normative value of the Tradition of the Church.[3]

The magisterium of the Church is not, as Jones called it, "a nervous mistress of exegesis," but it advocates une causalité reciproque (Moeller) between dogma and Scripture. The authority of the Fathers[4] and the analogy of faith[5] are two further cri-

---

[1]Jones, op. cit., p. 17 f.

[2]See above, pp. 54-55, about Faith and Order Conference at Lund.

[3]Jones, op. cit., p. 19 et passim; C. Moeller, "Chronique Biblique," Esprit et Vie, III (1950), 270 f.; K. H. Schelkle, "Zur neueren katholischen Exegese des Neuen Testaments," Theologische Rundschau, XIV (1942), 173 f.

[4]J. Chapman, "Fathers of the Church," The Catholic Encyclopedia, VI (1909), 1-18; E. Aman, "Pères de l'Eglise," Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, XII, 1 (1933), 1192-1215.

[5]Cruveilhier, op. cit., p. 1518 f.; Mangenot, op. cit., pp. 2332-43.

teria of Biblical hermeneutics by which the adequacy and completeness of Catholic exegesis, both scientific and theological, can be ascertained. Both of these criteria are of spiritual, dogmatical rather than scientific, critical value. But the modern popes, who worked and work hard for the "conjunction" of modern science and the wisdom of the Fathers as well as the doctrina of the Church's past and present magisterium, expect that modern Catholic Biblical hermeneutics will bring forth "new fruit" under these premises.[1]

The third major aspect of the system of Biblical hermeneutics in modern Catholicism is known as "proforistics," the discipline that is concerned with the different forms of Scriptural exposition and their different purposes.[2] Fernández distinguishes[3] three forms of exposition: (1) the imperfect form--translations, paraphrases, glossae, scholia, postillae, catenae, etc.; (2) the scientific expositions in form of commentaries, the works on Biblical Introduction, and exegetical lectures at Catholic schools; and (3) the popular exposition for edification, religious education, private devotion, and for the use in sermons.

With regard to the first of the three forms the problem of translation is the most acute one as concerns not only the inner-Catholic controversy over this issue,[4] but also the contro-

---

[1]See above, pp. 126, 128-29 (ad E.B., No. 554).

[2]See above, p. 136, n. 2.

[3]Fernández, op. cit., p. 293 f., pp. 418-25.

[4]See above, p. 121 (ad E.B., No. 535-37), and p. 137, n. 1; R. Knox, The trials of a translator (New York, 1949), passim.

versy between Protestants and Catholics.[1] The conservativism and ecclesiastical control[2] on the one hand, and the apparent discrepancies between hermeneutical theory and exegetical practice[3] on the other hand, are features of modern Catholic hermeneutics that are readily admitted by Catholics themselves. When it comes to justifying the continuation of applying hermeneutical principles to actual interpretation (of which translation is only one part), Vaccari turns up with the following three arguments representative of the Catholic position in this matter. First, since the Bible is something like the "foundation charter" of a "religious society" called the Church of Christ, some principal rules for translation (as part of proforistics) are quite necessary in order that the charter may be used and interpreted rightly.[4] Second, since the Bible is mutilated by non-Catholics, it is necessary to justify and to set forth the whole Biblical Canon including the Old Testament Apocrypha, for thus only is the "naturale pienezza e integrità" of Scripture preserved.[5] Third, since every translator is a traitor (traduttore traditore), Catholics have to be especially on guard when it comes to Biblical translations; Catholics must insist that the Church alone can authorize any translation, old or new, and that the Bible is "not

---

[1]A. Vaccari, "Bibbia e Bibbie," Biblica, XIX (1938), 231-43.

[2]See above, p. 96, n. 2, and p. 105, n. 2-3.

[3]Knox, op. cit., pp. 21 and 34: "Popes and Bishops are always telling us we ought to read the Bible" . . . but "the new wine of the Gospel is kept in strangely cobwebby bottles."

[4]Vaccari, op. cit., pp. 231-35.

[5]Ibid., pp. 235-38.

for all, nor is it, all by itself (without authorized comments) clear for all."[1]

As to the scientific exposition of Scripture, notably at Catholic theological seminaries, three points are repeatedly emphasized and, in theory at least, interrelated[2]--the scientific, the dogmatical, and the spiritual or devotional orientation in the use and understanding of Scripture. In this threefold hermeneutical orientation of scientific Biblical exegesis becomes evident what had already been observed in the preceding Chapters V and VI of this study,[3] how the Classical Greek, Hellenistic, the Rabbinical, the Patristic, the Monastic, the Medieval theological, and the Humanistic traditions of Scriptural interpretation were integrated in modern Catholic hermeneutics fashioned after the example set by Jerome[4] and Thomas Aquinas.[5] Even within Ecumenical Protestantism a discussion about the relevance of some of these traditions for Ecumenical theology appeared to becalled for.[6]

The emphasis on the purpose and usefulness of Biblical

---

[1]Ibid., pp. 238-42.

[2]See above, p. 90 f. (ad E.B., Nos. 103-105; 162-80); p. 06, n. 1; p. 100; p. 105, n. 2; p. 109)ad E.B., Nos. 480-81); p. 112, n. 2; p. 123 (ad E.B., No. 542); p. 133 f. (ad E.B., Nos. 566-67); p. 161, n. 2-3; p. 162, n. 1, 5-6; p. 163, n. 3-4; p. 165 f.

[3]See above, pp. 99; 106-107; 117, n. 2; 128 f.; 137, n. 2; 150; 152 f.; 154, n. 5; 159, n. 5; 160, n. 1-2; 161, n. 2; 163, n. 2-5.

[4]See above, p. 107 f., Benedict XV, Encyclical Spiritus Paraclitus (ad E.B., Nos. 445-52).

[5]See above, pp. 103; 106, n. 4; 143 (point 2c); 178, n. 3.

[6]See above, pp. 61-65; cf. p. 142, n. 2.

exposition, based on the integrated complexity of the tradition of Catholic hermeneutics, differs according to the need or situation that is focused on. Clergy as well as laity should benefit from the right approach to Scripture (1) by learning to appreciate Scripture as "the perennial source of spiritual life" that deepens the understanding and the exercise of Christian virtue, morals, or ethics;[1] (2) by bringing them to realize that Scripture contains "the living and inspiring image of Christ" which has to be rendered intelligible to the faithful and to the world at large.[2] Rightly and fully interpreted in commentaries and in textbooks on Biblical theology, Scripture is to retain or regain its role as the anima of theology;[3] (3) Biblical exposition is useful also for apologetical purposes, to prove either the historicity of the Biblical revelation, or the verity of the religious doctrine of Scripture, the doctrina Christi.[4]

The need for an hermeneutical orientation even of popular expositions of Scripture is acknowledged, mainly in terms of the usefulness of adequate Biblical exposition in the preaching office of the parish ministry.[5] It is in this context that the modern popes come to speak of the usefulness of the allegorical interpretation that goes beyond the actual, literal sense, and

---

[1]See above, pp. 133-34 (ad E.B., Nos. 566-67).

[2]See above, p. 89 (ad E.B., No. 86); pp. 145 f.

[3]See above, p. 94 (ad E.B., No. 114); p. 110 (ad E.B., No. 483); pp. 126-27 (ad E.B., No. 551); p. 172, n. 2.

[4]See above, p. 120 (ad E.B., No. 533); p. 123; p. 128 (ad E.B., No. 554).

[5]See above, p. 110, n. 2; p. 133.

therefore cannot claim inspiration and inerrancy. It may be used for illustrating dogmas and for commending ethical conduct, for promoting "virtue and piety,"[1] and for popular or scientific presentations of faith and morals in theology.[2] But for a genuinely Catholic concept of proforistics such usus externus of Scripture is not necessary at all, because as Pius XII clearly said, the "integral and accurate interpretation" of the very literal meaning of Scripture would yield all the treasures it is said to contain according to noematics.

This concludes the presentation of the concept of Biblical hermeneutics in modern Roman Catholic theology and of the relevance hermeneutical theories and traditions have for the religious and theological life of modern Roman Catholicism. Out of a comparison of the relevance of Biblical hermeneutics for Ecumenical Protestantism and Roman Catholicism can follow then the final evaluation of the theological and ecumenical implications of Biblical hermeneutics.

---

[1]See above, p. 92 (ad E.B., No. 108); p. 93 (ad E.B., No. 112).

[2]See above, p. 128 (ad E.B., No. 553).

PART III

THE WORD OF GOD AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Ecumenical Implications of Biblical Hermeneutics

CHAPTER VIII

A CRITICAL COMPARISON OF THE ROLE OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS IN ECUMENICAL PROTESTANTISM AND ROMAN CATHOLICISM

There are first of all some basic similarities between the Ecumenical Protestant and the Roman Catholic concept of the nature and task of Biblical hermeneutics. The necessity as well as the usefulness of being concerned theoretically with the problem of how to use and understand the Bible in the Church and in theology are fully recognized on both sides. What contributed to the revival of hermeneutical interests on both sides were basically the same issues: (1) the influence of historical and literary criticism upon, and its integration with, both the traditional and the contemporary theological, dogmatical concerns in exegesis;[1] (2) the recognition of the validity of the teaching embodied in the tradition as well as the present magisterium of the church for scientific and devotional exegesis;[2] (3) the traditionally or newly recognized need for a spiritual, devotional orientation of Biblical interpretation;[3] (4) new attempts at de-

---

[1]See above, pp. 4; 12-14; 129 (ad E.B., Nos. 555-61); p. 178 f.; cf. pp. 151-55; p. 159, n. 4.

[2]See above, p. 75 f.; p. 95 (ad E.B., No. 116; pp. 180-84.

[3]See above, pp. 8-12; p. 160, n. 2.

fining the peculiar noetic, epistemological implications of the divine-human encounter in the act of eschatological revelation, of inspiration, and of understanding and interpreting the "Word of God";[1] and (5) the contemporary reappraisal of the exegetical traditions and cultural factors that shaped the development and condition the modern concept of Biblical hermeneutics.[2]

The similarity of the Ecumenical Protestant and Catholic conceptions of Biblical hermeneutics as concerns its task and purpose for Church and theology lies in the following ideas: (1) To establish the use of the criteria of historical, literary criticism and of other analytical sciences as the basis of all religious, theological interpretation.[3] (2) To provide criteria philosophically and "Biblically" relevant for the task of integrating science and faith intelligibly.[4] (3) To make the authority of Scripture relevant to the structure and content of the required contemporary Christian witness in doctrine, ethics, and worship.[5] (4) To acknowledge as legitimate theological criteria only those that are available in the two "deposits" of revelation

---

[1]The two great issues are the problem of inspiration (see above, p. 72, point 1; p. 77 f., point 5; pp. 163 f. and 174 f.) and the problem of the religious and non-religious variety of Vorverständnis that condition the Biblical hagiographer as well as the modern interpreter (see above, p. 73 f., point 3; p. 175, n. 4).

[2]Cf. p. 14 f.; pp. 61-65, with chaps. v-vi; cf. p. 163, n. 2-5.

[3]Cf. p. 21, n. 3; p. 32; p. 78, point 6; with p. 129; p. 178 f.

[4]Cf. p. 41; p. 44 f.; with p. 129 (ad E.B., No. 554); p. 177.

[5]Cf. p. 39 f., point 1; with p. 141 f.; p. 168 f.

and faith: Scripture, i.e., the unity of the two Testaments and the Biblical Canon,[1] and Tradition.[2]

There is agreement also over the theoretical and practical value of Biblical hermeneutics in terms of its contribution to an understanding of the "Ecumenical" or "Catholic" implications of the unique character of the union and unity which God, Christ, and Spirit have with mankind and the "world" as witnessed to by Scripture, Tradition, and the Church.[3] The theoretical concern over how to interpret Scripture in order to improve the _scientia_ of the Savior and to partake more fully of the _divitiae_ of Christ is recognized by Protestants and Catholics as relevant to the apologetical or polemical as well as to the missionary concerns of theology to prove the unity and verity of the Church and her message.[4]

There is a striking resemblance also of the theological criteria established and used, at least theoretically, by Protestant and Catholic exegetes. The following criteria are spoken of most: (1) the unity of the Old and New Testaments, or the quest for an authentically Biblical concept of hermeneutics;[5] (2) the nature and significance of Christ, or the christological impli-

---

[1]Cf. pp. 32; 42, n. 2; 66, n. 2; 76 f., point 3, 81; with pp. 148 ff.; p. 156, n. 2.

[2]Cf. p. 71, point 1; p. 75 f.; with p. 95; p. 165, n. 3-4; p. 182 f.

[3]Cf. p. 72 f. with p. 174, n. 1, _et passim_.

[4]Cf. p. 66 (scope of Arnoldshain Conference); with p. 107 (ad _E.B._, Nos. 445-47; p. 111 (ad _E.B._, No. 494).

[5]Cf. pp. 30; 33, n. 1; 72, point 6; with pp. 144; 148 ff.; 158 f. Cf. also above, n. 1.

cations of hermeneutics;[1] (3) the historically and constitutionally unique union of God with the Biblical hagiographers in the act of inspiration, or the criterion of distinguishing between the "Word of God" and "Holy Scripture";[2] (4) the eschatological nature of Biblical revelation, or the relevance of the Biblical concept of eschatology for hermeneutical theory;[3] (5) the Biblical concept of "Church" and "kerygma," or the ecclesiological implications of hermeneutics;[4] and (6) the Biblical concept of the presence of God, as Holy Spirit, in History, in "the Letter," in Man, in the Church, and the like; i.e., the issue of the pneumatological implications of Biblical hermeneutics.[5]

There is noticeable also a similarity of the emphasis on the limitation of Biblical hermeneutics as a scientific discipline, and of the conscious or unconscious rejection of any scientific theological system of hermeneutics.[6] In the theological

---

[1]Cf. pp. 33; 36, n. 1; 55; 71, point 2; 77, point 4; with p. 111 (ad E.B., No. 495); p. 134 (ad E.B., No. 568); p. 140, n. 1).

[2]Cf. p. 77 f., point 5; with p. 130 (ad E.B., No. 556 f.); p. 174, n. 2.

[3]Cf. pp. 50, 59; with p. 88 (ad E.B., No. 81, calling Scripture "letters of God sent from heaven to the pilgrims on earth"); cf. p. 177.

[4]Cf. p. 72, point 6; p. 75 f.; with p. 94 (ad E.B., No. 113); p. 181.

[5]On the Spirit as hermeneutical principle, see p. 52 f.; p. 56, point 2; p. 58, n. 2; p. 74, point 4. Identical with Spirit is the hermeneutical norm of the living and present Christ; see p. 71, point 2; p. 89 (ad E.B., No. 86); cf. p. 181, n. 1, where the Church, as the Body of Christ, is the representation and actualization of Christ and the Spirit.

[6]Cf. pp. 49-51; with p. 96 (ad E.B., Nos. 131, 134); p. 145 f.; p. 177, n. 2.

debates of the Ecumenical Movement and in the controversies accompanying the theological, Biblical renaissance of modern Catholicism there has been a keen awareness at times of the latent or openly threatening dangers for the right use and understanding of Scripture, due to secular or religious forces at work from within or without the Church. They are the dangers of a scientific, theological rationalism or positivism,[1] of an unscientific, irrational or anti-rational spiritualism, mysticism,[2] or even sentimentalism,[3] and the paralyzing influence of any reactionary dogmatism or uncompromising traditionalism.[4]

In looking back over Part I and Part II of this study, and comparing any one section of either part with any one of the other, one cannot help but be puzzled by the difference in terminology and the differences in the very approach to the interpretability and intelligibility of revelation and of the Word of God.[5] What is often true of the theological debates among the churches pledged to ecumenical cooperation, is certainly true of any theological encounter between Protestant and Catholic exegetes--a confusion of tongues with a variety of seemingly incompatible terminologies and methodologies. The emphasis on the

---

[1]Cf. p. 50 with pp. 154-55 and 167-68.

[2]Cf. p. 50 with p. 168 (on Pascal).

[3]G. Brillet, in Guide to the Bible (ed. A. Robert and A. Tricot; tr. E. P. Arbez and M. McGuire) Vol. II (1955), 546: "There is danger in (some Protestant as well as Catholic) publications of sentimentalism taking the place of solid doctrine."

[4]See p. 44, n. 1-2; cf. p. 175, n. 3, for further references.

[5]Cf. p. 171, n. 3.

similarities between Ecumenical Protestant concepts and Roman Catholic ideas of Biblical hermeneutics would be misleading and sentimental, if it were left without the necessary complimentary emphasis on apparent and decisive dissimilarities. The more conspicuous dissimilarities are:

1. Concerning the recognition of "tradition" as an ultimate hermeneutical criterion. The Ecumenical Protestant discussion tends to emphasize the living and coming Christ as the primary criterion over against both Scripture and Tradition, with no other identification of the authority of Christ than with the historical records, the sacramental, liturgical, and ethical representations, and the eschatological preaching. The Catholic discussion which takes Christ also as normative for both Scripture and Tradition, identifies this norm with the magisterium of the Church of Rome.

2. Concerning the christological implications of Biblical hermeneutics. Protestants can barely agree on the smallest common denominator,[1] the deliberately flexible "Basis" of the W.C.C., confessing Jesus as God and Savior. Catholics bring to bear the traditional propositions of "classical," orthodox Christology on hermeneutical theory, especially on the concept of inspiration, and the infallibility or inerrancy of Scripture as the basis for any claim of Scriptural authority.

3. Concerning the problem of the theological and non-theological presuppositions of exegesis. The ecumenical encounter itself, and the application of analytical, critical sciences to the object, and to the very process, of interpretation, both have

---

[1]p. 57, n. 4.

brought about in Ecumenical Protestantism an extreme self-consciousness of those conditioning factors. Roman Catholic exegetes, equally aware of those factors, solve the problem by accepting the officially decreed integration of critical science with the theological teaching of the Church of Rome. This implies that the more fully and genuinely Catholic an interpreter is predisposed to Catholic doctrine, the better. The empirical Church of Rome is the actualization of "the Word of God." For the Ecumenical Protestant exegete it is the other way around--the more he is prejudiced by his denominational ties, the worse off he is; and he cannot substitute his denominational presuppositions simply by those of another kind, even as universal and ecumenical as those of the W.C.C. The only legitimate predispositions that an exegete may have according to Ecumenical hermeneutics are a precise knowledge of commonly approved scientific rules of exegesis, and the confession of Jesus as God and Savior. In the light of these two criteria all other presuppositions are to be reconsidered.

4. Concerning the ecclesiological, eschatological, and pneumatological implications of Biblical hermeneutics. Ecumenical Protestant agreement shows that no one particular Church or church tradition, no one particular dogmatical system, not even the doctrinal consensus reached at Ecumenical conferences, should be recognized as adequate norm for understanding and interpreting the fulness of God's eschatological revelation in history, of the universal availability of the eschatological Spirit, and of the extent and nature of the Body of Christ, the Church. Like faith, understanding is taken as an eschatological

category; though conditioned by experienceable data of the "general" or "special" revelations of God in history, nature, and the mind of man, the adequacy and fulness of man's understanding of God, and the interpretation thereof, are rationally, logically, scientifically unverifiable. Catholic exegetes basically agree with this concept, but emphasize in addition that in the revelation, incarnation, condescension of God, even the unverifiability of the eschatological nature of the Biblically-attested self-disclosure of God became propositional in a way that has its analogia entis in the empirical Church of Rome, the traditional dogma, the liturgy, etc. Ecumenical Protestantism emphasizes against traditional Protestant denominationalism and confessionalism that the doctrinal and hermeneutical propositions are acceptable only in analogia fidei--the Church of Christ in the believer and the community of believers, and the understanding of the Word of God in the faith-interpretation of the words of Scripture.

5. Concerning spiritual, devotional preparations as prerequisits for adequate Biblical interpretation. Protestants suggest prayer and meditation in the individual or communal use of Scripture in home and church. Catholics request a specific liturgical discipline and the obedience to the Apostolic See as prerequisits.

6. Concerning the necessity of scientific, critical exegesis to precede theological interpretation. Protestants issue warnings not to become positivistic or rationalistic over using rational heuristics, and to beware of the fateful suspension of the scientific critical analysis of the "letter" by a "pneumatic"

exegesis. Catholics, equally aware of the problem of the relation of science and faith, and of the limitation of analytical and synthetical reasoning, follow the Thomistic system, according to which all criteria and norms of interpretation are ultimately subject to the living Church.

7. Concerning the apologetical function of Biblical hermeneutics. In Ecumenical Protestantism, hermeneutical theory, like any other theological principle, can no longer be conceived of as serving one particular church and its confessional theology; nor can it be employed for the illusory end of justifying the World Council of Churches as the historical representation of the Biblical "Body of Christ." The apologetical function of hermeneutics, as that of "constructive" theology as a whole, is now only conceived of as restoring the truly Biblical concept of "the essence of Christianity" minus its philosophical, confessional, and cultural misinterpretations. In Catholicism, however, due to the identification of what Spicq calls "le principe de la finalité progressive de la révélation scripturaire"[1] with the theological and institutional system of the Roman Church, the apologetical function of Biblical hermeneutics is that of proving how and why the doctrina Christi (or Biblical Theology) is historically and essentially identical with Catholic dogmatics, or of demonstrating, as Leo XIII decreed,[2] that the infallible magisterium of the Roman Church consists in auctoritate etiam Sacrae Scripturae.

---

[1]Spicq, op. cit., p. 286.

[2]See above, p. 90 (ad E.B., No. 116).

In concluding this chapter on the comparison of Ecumenical Protestant and Roman Catholic principles of exegesis a final justification of this comparative procedure is still necessary. For the comparison was made between two systems, each of a different category, and the comparison would, therefore, appear to be improper. The evaluation of the dissimilarities has made clear that the very presuppositions and the purposes of Biblical hermeneutics in Catholicism and in the theological work of the Ecumenical Movement are different. The methodological, theological, dogmatical tools employed for making Biblical hermeneutics relevant to modern Catholicism and to the Ecumenical Movement are incomparable. The differences between Roman Catholicism and the Protestant churches united or federated in the World Council of Churches are no more, and no less, real and fundamental than the differences that exist among the member-churches of the W.C.C. as well as those existing within the paradoxical complexity of the Roman Catholic community. This point has frequently been implied in publications of recent years.[1]

But one has to consider also one other important factor--the employment of a common stock of tools by even the most uncompromising opponents. Among these tools commonly employed are those of the analytical sciences, of the synthetical labors in philosophy or dogmatical, speculative theology, and of devotional

---

[1]F. Leenhardt, Der Protestantismus im Urteil der römisch katholischen Kirche (Zurich, 1943; E. Kinder, "Protestant and Roman Catholic encounter. An ecumenical obligation," Ecumenical Review, VII (1955), 338-46; K. E. Skydsgaard, One in Christ (Muhlenberg, 1957); on the Catholic side are T. Sartory, Die oekumenische Bewegung und die Einheit der Kirche (Meitingen near Augsburg, 1955); J. M. Todd, Catholicism and the Ecumenical Movement (New York, 1956).

practices. And all these tools are used, either separately or in any possible combination of the three, for one and the same purpose, that of getting some kind of benefit from the one practice still held necessary and in common by all--the interpretation of Holy Scripture. I hope to have gathered enough evidence by this study to justify a secondary claim of my thesis that there is no room any more either for feelings of Protestant superiority over Catholics in matters pertaining to Biblical interpretation,[1] or for fruitless pessimism.[2]

Whether or not actual Biblical interpretation or the theoretical concern about hermeneutical principles can contribute to overcoming the deep-rooted "pride and prejudice" one Christian denomination has been cultivating against another, are two separate questions. Whether a sincere, spiritual exegesis of "the Word of God" can or cannot prove to be like the very arm of God lifting the veils of prejudice and misunderstanding from the hearts and minds of theologians, laymen, and hierarchs of the various churches, can be no more the object of a scientific judgment than the question whether sharing in Christian worship or ethics can do the trick. But through the common interest in, and the recognition of, the validity and the ecumenical relevance of Biblical hermeneutics as a scientific theological discipline

---

[1]See above, p. 142, n. 3, and p. 160 f.; cf. H. v. Soden's conclusion in Urchristentum und Geschichte, II (Tübingen, 1956): "Apart from textual criticism Biblical studies are not really free in the Catholic Church."

[2]Cf. O. A. Piper, in Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXVI (1957), 76: "History has shown that the differences between Rome and Wittenberg are too deeply rooted to be settled by means of Biblical exegesis."

one has no choice but to evaluate scientifically what grounds there are, if any, to such high claims as that voiced by Bishop Besson of Lausanne, "Ueber dem Evangelium haben sich unsere Väter getrennt; über dem Evangelium werden wir uns wieder finden." Some tentative advances in this direction have already been mentioned in Part One of this study.[1] On the basis of my research I want to propose then in the following chapter my thesis of the ecumenical implications of Biblical hermeneutics, their presuppositions, their theoretical nature, and their practical relevance.

---

[1]Cf. Schweitzer, op. cit., (above, pp. 41-53); see also G. E. Wright, "The World Council of Churches and Biblical Interpretation," Interpretation, III (1949), 50-61; Editorial, "The Bible and Ecumenical Theology," ibid., IV (1950), 48-50.

CHAPTER IX

THE ECUMENICAL IMPLICATIONS OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

Biblical hermeneutics is the "armed vision" or the "grammar" of Christian faith. It is of relevance for scientific theology and for the theological foundations of the Ecumenical Movement or of any interconfessional advances by virtue of its two constitutive factors: (1) the peculiar object of hermeneutical studies--the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; (2) the peculiar approach to Scripture as a document, both of the historical origin of faith (or the fact that God <u>has</u> spoken) and of the continuing vitality of faith (or the experience that God is speaking still). Biblical hermeneutics is the scientific, critical occupation with the problem of making intelligible and relevant to the Church and to the "world" the dynamics of all theology and of the Christian life--that God has spoken and that there is yet more truth and light to come from "His Holy Word."

The "Word of God" in Scripture, however, is qualitatively not different from the "Word of God" in the preaching of the Church. The claim of the Christian Church to speak and transmit, and to have spoken, the "Word of God" since the times of prophets and apostles can be substantiated apart from Scripture by the multiple forms of "Faith and Order," i.e., of dogma and worship,

and by all the historical manifestations of the actual life of the Church--the political and religious history of the Church, the works of religious art, and the like. This approach to the "Word of God" could have been, and by some churches actually has been, chosen as the more adequate and profitable way to recall that and what God was speaking.

But from the beginning, first in form of the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament, then in form of the integration of all Christian witness and theology with the Biblical documents, the Church emphasized against theological heresies from within, and philosophical, cultural heresies from without, that the unity of the "Word of God" and the unity of the "Church of Christ" were to be identified with the right interpretation of the accepted Canon of Scriptures. What does "right" and "accepted" imply? It is the task of Biblical hermeneutics for theology and the Church to provide an answer to this question which is at once historically, critically tenable and theologically, spiritually relevant.

Biblical hermeneutics has a constructive theological function for all scientific disciplines that have recourse to the Bible as a historical or religious document with some kind of relevance or authority. The problem of Biblical hermeneutics, therefore, is equally relevant, at least virtually, to all disciplines of Christian theology. In this present study, however, the scope of hermeneutics is taken more specifically as the task of a scientific and theological orientation of the interpretation of Scripture as executed by the professional exegete and by the teacher or student of Biblical Theology.

The immediate impression one gets from reading the material presented in Part I and Part II of this study is that nearly everybody talks about hermeneutics in one way or another, but that hardly anybody seems to be doing anything about it in terms of its relevance for theology. The trouble seems to be that the use and understanding of the Bible, though taken as the basis of theology, instead of uniting the churches in their efforts of giving an intelligible witness to the world, rather led and con-continues to lead to uncompromising sectarian and confessional views of the nature of the "Word of God" and of the "Church of Christ." The very way Biblical hermeneutics, along with other disciplines of theology, is actually employed, i.e., misused, to justify denominational or dogmatical theories and practices seems to discredit any claim of relevance that hermeneutical theory purportedly has for an ecumenical conception of theology and the Church. Yet, in spite of the dubious role hermeneutical theories have played in the history of Christian theology and in the history of the Church, there is, nevertheless, an indubitable substance to the claim that Biblical hermeneutics can serve the ecumenical cause. How such a claim can be substantiated is outlined below. One way of substantiating this claim could be simply to point to the scientifically unaccountable fact that Scripture continues to be used as the one point of common reference for even the bitterest opponents in theology and the Church at large. As exegete, I propose another way of doing it, based on the very idea of hermeneutics and its scientifically verifiable integration of critical, theological, and spiritual factors relevant to the understanding (or misunderstanding!) of the words of Scripture.

The first ecumenical implication of Biblical hermeneutics is based on its theoretical assertion that the true and full meaning of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and the right use and understanding of the "Word of God" ought to be determined by the criteria of Scripture itself. By putting into a scientifically-debatable system all the constituent elements of the nature of the Bible (e.g., its divine-human auctoritas, status of inspiration, and its various meanings), Biblical hermeneutics is designed to make the structure and the content of Scripture to be the scientifically-verifiable criterion for all Christian life in theology and the Church.

Biblical hermeneutics evaluates the principle of the unique encounter and union of God and Man as the fundamental criterion of theological methodology and epistemology. This evaluation, as part of the task of hermeneutics, is executed independently from, but not unrelated to, the scientific study of christology, ecclesiology, pneumatology, and eschatology; or, simply, the evaluation also requires the study of the content of Scripture. Only for the sake of the clarity of my argument do I emphasize the distinction between the structure and the content of Scripture. As to its structure, the authority of Scripture rests on the inextricable unity of Spirit and Letter, of Verbum and verba. This implies, according to Biblical hermeneutics, that the authority of God, of the Word or the revelation of God, can be made relevant to the constructive efforts in theology or to the "Ecumenical" and "Catholic" efforts of uniting the churches, neither by a literalistic, positivistic use of the book, nor by a charismatic, mystic use of the Spirit, of God or Christ, as

present in the Church or in the world at large. The ecumenical authority of Scripture is proportionate to the degree in which the spiritual meaning, the "Word of God" is derived from the literal, historical meaning. In this respect the peculiar nature or structure of Scripture as evaluated in Biblical hermeneutics resembles the nature of Christ as evaluated in christology. As the Lordship of the living Christ over the Church and the World is inextricably linked with the life and teaching of the historical Jesus, so is the authority of Scripture for theology subject to historical critical exegesis.

The second ecumenical implication of Biblical hermeneutics is based on the ways and means in which the full content of the eschatological revelation of God in history can be evaluated from Scripture. While the two exegetical disciplines, exegesis and Biblical theology, are concerned with the actual "critical performance" of presenting and evaluating the details as well as the full content of Scripture, Biblical hermeneutics is concerned with keeping the methods of the use and understanding of Scripture and the presuppositions of the systematic presentation of the theological content of Scripture under constant critical scrutiny. Biblical hermeneutics is like an ever-present watchman hired by the Church to watch over the adequacy and accuracy of both, the rational scientific and the theological spiritual approach of religious (or non-religious) man or society to the historical, literary documents of the revelation of God.

By keeping the critical, i.e., the scientifically-verifiable spotlight turned on the very processes necessary or unnecessary for the understanding of the revelation of God in history,

Biblical hermeneutics renders an invaluable service of ecumenical relevance. With the welcome help of secular sciences (the humanities, the social sciences, psychology, and many others) hermeneutical theory aims at uncovering the presuppositions that determine the variety of the Biblical writings collected in the Canon of Scripture. The more clearly and poignantly the variety of Scripture is brought to bear on theology, the more it must then be made relevant that the unity of a theological system, the unity of the Christian witness, and the unity of the Church cannot be derived from a scientifically-demonstrable unity of the Biblical Canon; for its unity cannot be demonstrated historically or from any other viewpoint. All the cultural, religious, social, and psychic presuppositions that make up the variety of Scripture would warrant, as history seems to prove, only a variety of theologies and a variety of denominations, of dogmatical, liturgical, ethical traditions which all claim the authority of Scripture.

Another more positive contribution of hermeneutical theory to ecumenics by advocating scientific critical studies of Scripture lies in guarding the approach to the various facets of Biblical faith and revelation. By keeping exegetical methodology and the peculiar nature or structure of the Biblical Canon clearly defined, Biblical hermeneutics enables the scientific exegetes and the students of Old and New Testament Theology, who are separately at work in the various churches, to make their ecumenical contributions by presenting as "objectively" as possible the full content of Scripture. The controversial quest for the historical Jesus, and the debates over the eschatological, apocalyptic, myth-

ological implications of form and content of Scripture, like other problems of interpretation that were discussed by the theologians of all churches, were largely the result of the application of hermeneutical criteria to the actual or traditional use and understanding of Scripture in the theology and liturgy of the churches. Interdenominational projects of new critical text editions of the original manuscripts, of scientific critical and theological commentaries, and the modern boom of translations for the use in churches and on the mission field are some further examples of the ecumenical implication of Biblical hermeneutics.

The third ecumenical implication that the study of Biblical hermeneutics has for theology is based on the theoretical evaluation of the spiritual and dogmatical presuppositions required for the right use and understanding of Scripture. The necessity of such requirements is argued for on the basis of the hermeneutical definition of the structure and content of Scripture. If according to hermeneutical theory the nature of the Bible and its authority are both human and divine, it becomes a matter of logical conclusion that besides scientific critical studies, i.e., "rational heuristics," there ought to be also religious, theological criteria, or a concern for "theological heuristics." This latter concern is of ecumenical relevance because of two reasons. It emphasizes that the interpreter of Scripture must have an adequate (and not an inadequate!) spiritual, devotional, religious disposition, or predisposition, in order to qualify for interpretation. It also emphasizes that this devotional disposition is to be held subject to, or to be integrated with, both the scientific critical study and the dog-

matical tradition, or the analogia fidei of the Church.

Hermeneutical theory brings thus to bear upon the ecumenical approach to the content and authority of Scripture not any one particular hermeneutical tradition that happens to be, or have been, favored or disfavored by the theology of a particular church. Rather, it brings to bear the variety of hermeneutical theological traditions upon the present task of reconstructing theology in an ecumenical way, of which Biblical interpretation is one part. This variety may be grouped according to its three main historical representations; the literary criticism of the Aristotelian tradition of poetics and rhetorics during the Hellenistic-Roman period and in Christian Humanism; the spiritualization of rational, literary historical criteria in gnosticism, monasticism, mysticism; and the theological rationalization of dogmatical, devotional, and scientific criteria in medieval and modern hermeneutics. Biblical hermeneutics, however, in contrast to the developments in literary criticism of modern philological sciences and their eclectic or pluralistic methodologies, advocates an integration of these various traditions on the basis of the theological evaluation of the peculiar structure and content of Scripture.

Finally, the fourth ecumenical implication of Biblical hermeneutics is to be seen in the theoretical evaluation of the actual historical and the ultimate theological norm of the interpretation of Scripture as part of a constructive and ecumenical effort of scientific theology. This norm, according to hermeneutical theory, is historically the eschatological revelation of God in history, i.e., in Jesus and the Church; theologically it

is God, the Spirit, or Jesus Himself. In bringing this to bear upon theology, hermeneutical theory as a system of scientifically-verifiable rational data and of dogmatical, spiritual traditions is ecumenically relevant; for in doing so, theology comes to deliver itself of the task of defining the nature and the limitation of a scientifical theological methodology and epistemology.

Biblical hermeneutics as part of the exegetical science, but concerned with theoretical definitions of what is the normative and adequate integration of scientific and theological methodologies, contributes to an ecumenically-relevant realization of the limitation not only of all scientific critical analysis of the verba Dei, but also of all dogmatical and ecclesiastical forms of identifying the full nature of the Verbum Dei. The function of Biblical hermeneutics in Christian theology is to give full credit to the critically-verifiable validity of both, the sciences and the dogma, the "analogy of faith," or the devotion of the individual believer for the word of God. But its function is also that of discrediting intelligibly, both rationally and theologically, any real, virtual or latent attempts of taking any one of those valid criteria as absolutes. By asserting through means of science that none other than God Himself is the ultimate norm of adequacy for the right and full understanding of the eschatological revelation in history, i.e., in Jesus and in the Mystical Body of Christ, His Church, Biblical hermeneutics contributes to making ultimately dispensable not only itself as a system of ecumenically-valid, normative hermeneutical principles, but also theology as the tool of rendering the nature

and unity of the Christian Faith and of the Church in a way that is intelligible to the "world."

The understanding and interpretation of God's eschatological self-disclosure in history are, like faith itself along with love and hope, attributes of the eschatological existence of the redeemed individual within the eschatological community, "the Church of Christ." It is the working of the Spiritus Creator, the promised advent of the "Paraclete" (John 14 and 16) by which alone can be verified both, the interpretation of Scripture and the constructive, dogmatical thinking of theology. Nevertheless, the quest for scientific verification remains as necessary and indispensable for the theologia viatorum, as the knowledge of the historical Jesus is for the recognition of the "Son of Man." To make this tension theoretically, theologically relevant is the ultimate ecumenical implication of the task of Biblical hermeneutics for theology and the Church. That Roman Catholicism is subject to the same charge as are the variety of churches and theologies represented by the World Council of Churches, that this tension is violated in favor of consistent and verifiable data of a rational, theological, institutional, or cultural kind, and to prove the validity of the charge of "de-eschatologizing" the nature and structure of "the Word of God" and of "the Church of Christ"--that would require an altogether separate and different study.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Dictionaries and Reference Works

Acta Apostolicae Sedis. Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1909--.

Acta Sanctae Sedis. Rome: Typographia Vaticana, 1865-1908.

d'Alès, A. (ed.) Dictionnaire Apologétique de la Foi Catholique. 4 vols. Paris: Beauchesne, 1925-28.

Denzinger, H. and Rahner, C. (eds.) Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum. 31st ed. Freiburg: Herder, 1957.

Enciclopedia Cattolica. 12 vols. Città del Vaticano: Ente per l'Enciclopedia Cattolica e per il Libro Cattolico, 1948-54.

Herbermann, C. G. et al. (eds.) The Catholic Encyclopedia. 15 vols. New York: Appleton, 1907-1912.

Internationale Zeitschriftenschau für die Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1951--.

Louis, C. (ed.) Rome and the Study of Scripture. 5th ed. St. Meinrad, Indiana: St. Meinrad's Abbey, 1953.

Pirot, L. (ed.) Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplément. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1928--.

Pontifical Biblical Commission (ed.). Enchiridion Biblicum. 3rd ed. Rome: Arnodo, 1956.

Orchard, B. (ed.) A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture. New York: Nelson, 1954.

Robert, A. and Tricot, A. (eds.) Initiation Biblique. 2nd ed. Paris: Desclée, 1948. Guide to the Bible, English tr. by E. P. Arbez and M. R. P. McGuire. Westminster: Newman Press, 1951-55.

Romig, W. (ed.) Guide to Catholic Literature. (1888-1951) 4 vols. Grosse Pointe, Michigan: Romig, n.d.

Rouët de Journel, M. J. (ed.) Enchiridion Patristicum. 19th ed. Freiburg: Herder, 1956.

Steinmueller, J. E. and Sullivan, K. (eds.) A Companion to Scripture Studies. New York: Wagner, 1945.

Vacant, A. and Mangenot, E. (eds.) Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique. 15 vols. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1909--.

Vigouroux, F. (ed.) Dictionnaire de la Bible. 5 vols. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1891-1912.

II. Books

Aubert, R. La Théologie catholique au milieu du XXe siècle. Louvain: Casterman, 1954.

Bonsirven, J. Exégèse Rabbinique et Exégèse Paulinienne. Paris: Beauchesne, 1939.

Braun, F. M. Les Études bibliques d'après l'encyclique de S. S. Pie XII, Divino Afflante Spiritu. Fribourg: Libraire de l'Université, 1946.

Brown, R. E. The sensus plenior of Sacred Scripture. Baltimore: St. Mary's University Press, 1955.

Claudel, Paul (ed.). Introduction au Livre de Ruth. Paris: Desclée, 1938.

Coppens, J. Les Harmonies des deux Testaments. Paris: Casterman, 1949.

Cornely, R. Historica et critica introductio in utriusque Testamenti libros sacros. Vol. I. Paris: Lethielleux, 1885.

Courtonne, Y. Saint Basile et l'hellénisme. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1934.

Daniélou, J. Origène. Paris: La Table Ronde, 1948.

_____. Sacramentum Futuri. Paris: Beauchesne, 1950.

Diétrich, S. de. Le Renouveau Biblique. "Ecclesia Militans." Neuchâtel: World Council of Churches, Study Department, 1945.

Eschweiler, K. Die zwei Wege der neueren Theologie. Augsburg: Filser, 1926.

Eynde, D. van den. Les Normes de l'enseignement chrétien dans la littérature patristique des trois premiers siècles. Paris: Gabalda, 1933.

Fuchs, E. Hermeneutik. Bad Cannstatt: Müllerschön, 1954.

Heiler, F. Alfred Loisy. Der Vater des Katholischen Modernismus. Munich: Erasmus, 1947.

Hermelink, H. Die Katholische Kirche unter den Pius-Päpsten des 20. Jahrhunderts. Zurich: Zollikon, 1949.

Hoberg, G. Die Fortschritte der Biblischen Wissenschaften. Freiburg: Herder, 1902.

Hodgson, L. (ed.) The Second World Conference on Faith and Order. New York: Macmillan, 1938.

Houtin, A. La Question Biblique au XIXe siècle. Paris: Picard, 1902.

_____. La Question Biblique au XXe siècle. Paris: Picard, 1906.

Kerrigan, A. St. Cyril of Alexandria. Interpreter of the Old Testament. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1952.

Kihn, H. Theodor von Mopsuestia und Junilius Africanus als Exegeten. Freiburg: Herder, 1880.

Knox, R. The Trials of a Translator. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1949.

Koenker, E. B. The Liturgical Renaissance in the Roman-Catholic Church. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954.

Kortleitner, F. X. Hermeneutica Biblica. New York: Pustet, 1923.

Lattey, C. (ed.) The Religion of the Scriptures. Cambridge: Heffer, 1921.

Leaders' Guides For Second Series Courses of the Standard Leadership Curriculum. Chicago: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., Division of Christian Education, n.d.

Leadership Education Handbook. First and Second Series Courses, 1956 Edition. New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., Division of Christian Education, 1956.

Leenhardt, F. Der Protestantismus im Urteil der römisch katholischen Kirche. Zurich: Zwingli, 1943.

Lonergan, B. J. F. Insight. A Study of Human Understanding. New York: Philosophical Library, 1956.

The Lordship of Christ over the World and the Church. A report from the consultation held at Arnoldshain, Germany, July 5-8, 1956. Geneva: World Council of Churches, Division of Studies, 1956.

Lubac, H. de. Histoire et Esprit. Paris: Aubier, 1950.

Marrou, H.-I. Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique. Paris: Boccard, 1938.

Meinertz, M. Theologie des Neuen Testaments. 2 vols. Bonn: Hanstein, 1950.

Penna, A. La lettera di Dio. Brescia: Morcelliana, 1952.

_____. Principi e carattere dell'esegesi di S. Gerolamo. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1950.

Pontet, M. L'Exégèse de S. Augustin Predicateur. Paris: Aubier, 1943.

Richardson, A. and Schweitzer, W. (eds.) Biblical Authority for Today. London: S.C.M. Press, 1951.

Rouse, R. and Neill, S. C. A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948. London: S.P.C.K. Press, 1945.

Sartory, T. Die oekumenische Bewegung und die Einheit der Kirche. Meitingen near Augsburg: Kyrios, 1955.

Schildenberger, J. Vom Geheimnis des Gotteswortes. Heidelberg: Kerle, 1950.

Schweitzer, W. Schrift und Dogma in der Oekumene. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1953.

Skydsgaard, K. E. One in Christ. Translated by A. C. Kildegaard. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957.

Smalley, B. The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1952.

Spicq, C. Esquisse d'une Histoire de l'Exégèse Latine au Moyen Age. Paris: Vrin, 1944.

Todd, J. M. Catholicism and the Ecumenical Movement. London, New York: Longmans, Green, 1956.

Tomkins, O. S. (ed.) The Third World Conference on Faith and Order. London: S.C.M. Press, 1953.

Vidler, A. R. The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934.

Visser't Hooft, W. A. (ed.) The Evanston Report. The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Evanston, 1954. New York: Harper, 1955.

_____. Our Ecumenical Task in the Light of History. Geneva: John Knox House Association, 1955.

World Council of Churches. Assembly Work Book, Evanston, 1954. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1954.

World Council of Churches. Six Ecumenical Surveys. Preparatory material for the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Evanston, 1954. New York: Harper, 1954.

III. Articles

Ahern, B. "Textual Directives of the Encyclical Divino Afflante Spiritu," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, VII (1945), 340-47.

Allgeier, A. "Begriffe und Wege der Biblischen Einleitung. Geschichtliche Erwägungen zu einem theologischen Gespräch," in Alttestamentliche Studien, ed. by H. Junker and J. Botterweck. Bonn: Hanstein, 1950. Pp. 1-15.

Bea, A. "L'enciclica Humani Generis e gli studi biblici," La Civiltà Cattolica, CI (1950), 417-30.

_____. "Progress in the Interpretation of Sacred Scripture," Theology Digest, I (1953), 67-71.

Burghardt, W. J. "On Early Christian Exegesis," Theological Studies, XI (1950), 78-116.

Burke, L. G. "Holy Scripture as a locus theologicus," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XI (1949), 351-69.

Byrne, E. J. "The Curriculum of Scriptural Studies in Our Seminaries," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, I (1939), 214-22, 333-41.

Cerfaux, L. "Simple réflexions à propos de l'exégèse apostolique," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, XXV (1949), 565-76.

Chirgwin, A. M. "Have the Bible and Its Circulation Any Significance for the Ecumenical Movement?" Ecumenical Review, VI (1954), 259-99.

Coppens, J. "L'efflorescence des études bibliques sur le vieux Continent," Analecta Lovanensis Biblica et Orientalia, 1954, pp. 51-65.

Cotter, A. C. "The Antecedents of the Encyclical Providentissimus Deus," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, V (1943), 117-24.

Daniélou, J. "Les Divers sens de l'Ecriture dans la tradition chrétienne primitive," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, XXIV (1948), 119-26.

_____ et al. "Sur l'exégèse biblique," Dieu Vivant, XIV (1949), 90-94.

Dejaifve, G. "Bible, Tradition, Magistère dans la théologie catholique," Nouvelle Revue Théologique, LXXVIII (1956), 135-51.

Diétrich, S. de. "New Roman Catholic Versions of the Bible," Ecumenical Review, II (1950), 314-16.

Ecumenical Chronicle. "Non-Theological Factors That May Hinder or Accelerate the Church's Unity," Ecumenical Review, IV (1952), 174-80.

Fernández, A. "Hermeneutica," in Institutiones Biblicae, I (6th ed.; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1951), 380-85.

Garofalo, S. "Gli umanisti italiani del secolo XV e la Bibbia," Biblica, XXVII (1946), 338-75.

Guillet, J. "Les Exégèses d'Alexandrie et Antioche. Conflit ou malentendu?" Recherches de science religieuse, XXXIV (1947), 257-302.

Jones, A. "Reflections on a Recent Dispute," Scripture, VIII (1956), 16-22.

Kinder, E. "Protestant and Roman Catholic Encounter. An Ecumenical Obligation," Ecumenical Review, VII (1955), 338-46.

Lebreton, J. "Le Désaccord de la foi populaire et de la théologie savante," Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique, XIX (1923), 481-506; XX (1924), 5-37.

Lonergan, B. "The Concept of Verbum in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas," Theological Studies, VII (1946), 349-92; VIII (1947), 35-79; X (1949), 3-40, 359-93.

Lubac, H. de. "Sur un vieux distique: la doctrine du quadruple sans," Mélanges offerts au R. P. Ferdinand Cavallera. Toulouse, 1948. Pp. 347-66.

Moeller, C. "Bible et Oecuménisme," Irénikon, XXIII (1950), 164-88.

Müller, O. "Zum Begriff der Tradition in der Theologie der letzten hundert Jahre," Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift, IV (1953), 164-86.

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., Information Service, Vol. XXXV, No. 31 (September 29, 1956).

Platt, W. J. "The Bible Societies and Cooperation amongst the Churches," Ecumenical Review, VI (1954), 379-84.

Schelkle, K. H. "Zur neueren katholischen Exegese des Neuen Testaments," Theologische Rundschau, XIV (1942), 173-99.

Schoder, R. "The Rebirth of Scriptural Theology," American Ecclesiastical Review, CXVII (1947), 81-101.

Schweitzer, W. "The Bible and the Church's Message to the World," Ecumenical Review, II (1950), 123-32.

Siegman, E. F. "The Use of Sacred Scripture in Textbooks of Dogmatic Theology," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XI (1949), 151-64.

Smyth, K. "The Inspiration of Scriptures," Scripture, VI (1954), 67-75.

Vaccari, A. "Bibbia e Bibbie," Biblica, XIX (1938), 231-43.

_____. "Esegesi ed esegeti al Concilio di Trento," Biblica, XXVII (1946), 320-37.

_____. "S. Tommaso e Lutero nella storia dell'esegesi," La Civiltà Cattolica, II (1934), 561-75; III (1935), 36-47.

Weigel, G. "The Historical Background of the Encyclical Humani Generis," Theological Studies, XII (1951), 208-230.

Worden, T. "Is Scripture To Remain the Cinderella of Catholic Theology?" Scripture, VIII (1956), 2-12.

Wright, G. E. "The World Council of Churches and Biblical Interpretation," Interpretation, III (1949), 50-61.

IV. Unpublished Material and Other Sources

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. "Report of Committee on Use and Understanding of the Bible to Executive Board, Division of Christian Education." Cincinnati, Ohio, February 15, 1957. (Mimeographed.)

_____, San Francisco Office. "Handbook for Interchurch Projects on the Use and Understanding of the Bible." San Francisco: Committee on the Use and Understanding of the Bible, n.d. (Mimeographed.)

_____, San Francisco Office. "A Word to the Leader." San Francisco: Committee on the Use and Understanding of the Bible, n.d. (Mimeographed.)

_____, Chicago Office. "How To Read and Study the Bible." Chicago: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., Division of Christian Education, n.d. (Mimeographed.)

World Council of Churches, Study Department. "From the Bible to the Modern World." Geneva, 1947. (Mimeographed.)

World Council of Churches, Study Department. "List of Publications and Study Documents." Geneva, 1956. (Mimeographed.)

_____. Personal letter from Robert Nelson, Secretary of the Division of Studies. October 11, 1956.

_____. Personal letter from H. H. Wolf, Director of the Ecumenical Institute and of the Graduate School of Theology at Bossey. October 30, 1957.